

**Arkansas Department of Education
Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group
Monday, August 29, 2016 - 5:00 PM
ADE Auditorium**

AGENDA

- | | |
|---|-----|
| I. Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group Meeting Called to Order
Presenter: Chair Tommy Branch | |
| II. Consideration to Approve Minutes - August 15, 2016
The members are requested to approve the minutes for the August 15, 2016,
meeting of the Little Rock Area Stakeholder Group.
Presenter: Deborah Coffman | 2 |
| III. State Procurement Process and Timeline
Presenter: Greg Rogers and Ron Byrns | 5 |
| IV. Consideration of Report from ForwARd Arkansas
On July 11, 2016, the Stakeholder Group requested to learn more about
ForwARd Arkansas. The full report is available at forwardarkansas.gov
Presenter: Susan Harriman, Executive Director of ForwARd | 14 |
| V. Consideration of the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE)
Mr. Jordan Posamentier, Deputy Policy Director for the Center on Reinventing
Public Education (CRPE),
will introduce CRPE, their approach to district/charter collaborations,
the research in this area, and how CRPE would approach the research
questions – the theory of action they use to hypothesize and structure the work,
share examples of specific work, and discuss some of the specific questions
being formulated by the group.
Presenter: Mr. Jordan Posamentier, Deputy Policy Director | 122 |
| VI. Consideration of Additional Requested Information | 147 |
| VII. Consideration of Agenda for Next Meeting - TBD
Presenter: Chair Tommy Branch | 159 |
| VIII. Adjournment
Presenter: Chair Tommy Branch | |

Minutes
Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group Meeting
Monday, August 15, 2016

The Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group met Monday, August 15, 2016, in the Arkansas Department of Education Auditorium. Chair Tommy Branch called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Members Present: Tommy Branch, Chair; Jim McKenzie, Vice-Chair; Tamika Edwards; Ann Brown Marshall; Antwan Phillips; Leticia Reta; and Dianna Varady.

Members Absent: none.

Audience: ADE staff, general public, and press.

The meeting was live streamed and the recording was posted on the ADE website at http://www.arkansased.gov/state-board/minutes/board_meeting_categories/2016.

Consideration to Approve Minutes – July 25, 2016

Ms. McKenzie moved, seconded by Ms. Edwards, to approve the July 25, 2016, minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of Discipline Data

During the July 11, 2016, meeting the group requested data on discipline. Dr. Gary Ritter, Faculty Director of the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas, reported school discipline rates for the identified schools over a three-year period through the 2014-2015 school year. He said the trends over time, by school type, indicated that Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD) had greater numbers of infractions and both PCSSD and charter schools indicated increased infractions over the three years of data. He noted the absence of In School Suspension (ISS) for the Little Rock School District (LRSD) and said he did not have information as to why LRSD did not have ISS data. He focused on Out of School Suspensions (OSS) because that is where students are missing instructional time and it may be important information to overall student achievement.

Dr. Ritter said total infractions by race/ethnicity groups indicated black students were disciplined more than other races at Little Rock School District, PCSSD (south of the river) and charter schools (south of the river). He indicated that these results mirror the national trends which also indicated a similarly high proportion of black students with infractions compared to other races. Dr. Ritter said the data showed that most disparities are between schools, not within schools (indicating that some schools may

be stricter in discipline policy enforcement). He indicated the quantitative data does not explain why the differences and disproportions occur, only that they existed. Qualitative data would need to be gathered to help answer the “why” questions.

The group requested to develop additional questions for consideration by Dr. Ritter and team. The group will email with Dr. Ritter and then make their questions public.

Consideration of Additional Maps

Mr. Jim McKenzie said data were compiled by Metroplan. He said additional maps are available at <http://www.metroplan.org>. He said the population moved out of Pulaski over 30 years as Faulkner, Lonoke and Saline counties grew. He said a majority of the population moved to the suburbs and out of the center of the city. He said a neighborhood evolves over a long wave of 100 years and in roughly 25 year segments; what happens to the nature of the area’s population in the third 25 year segment was most critical for continuing the neighborhood’s stability. He said in 1950 the city was comprised of 367 miles of roadway, with 1232 miles of roadway in 2015. He said a population of 102,213 people lived in 20 square miles in 1950. In 2015, a population of 199,511 people resided in 122 square miles in the Little Rock area.

Mr. McKenzie said he would like for the researcher to consider the impact of concentrated areas of poverty on student achievement. He said data indicated that Pulaski County sends 10 people to prison and prison sends back 12 people. He said the increase may contribute to the reason why people move out of the city.

Consideration of Villages

Dr. Richard Emmel said the village education proposal recommended self-managed Pre Kindergarten – grade 12 public schools on one campus built along major traffic corridors. He said a large education village has been developed in Great Britain and in certain American locations. He said villages were a more economical model and also provided students 13 continuous years within a stable environment in which they feel secure and valued. He recommended using public transportation instead of school buses.

Additional Information Requested of Charters and the ADE Charter Office

Charter School Director Ms. Alexandra Boyd said the Arkansas Charter Schools Program grant was distributed to all new charters for start up of planning and implementation of the charter mission.

The group requested information on the previous recipients of the funds.

Consideration of Report to State Board of Education

The State Board had requested a quarterly report and timeline of expected progress. Group members reviewed the draft report. The report will be provided to the State Board of Education on Friday, September 9 at 9:00 am.

Mr. Phillips motioned, seconded by Ms. Marshall, to accept the report. The motion carried unanimously.

Additional Information Requested

The group requested the following additional information:

- School improvement plan for Little Rock School District
- Amount of funds to each recipient of the charter grant
- Dates of the Community Listening Forums

Consideration of Public Comment

No one signed up for public comment.

Consideration of Future Dates

The group will consider future dates at the August 29 meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. McKenzie moved, seconded by Mr. Phillips, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

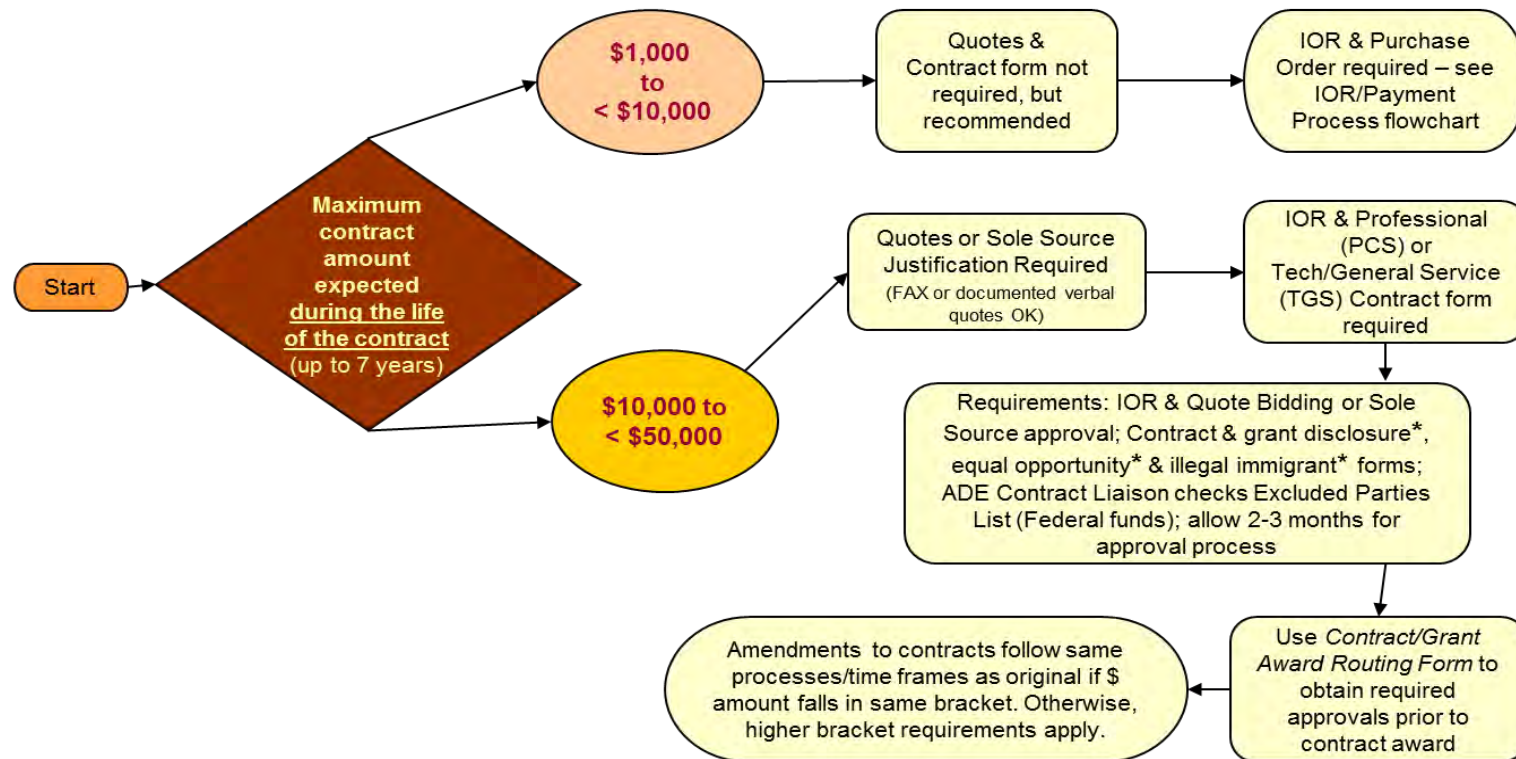
Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman

Number of Work Days from Purchase Request to Contractor Start Date
by Cumulative, Maximum Dollar Range for Maximum Term of Years:

Event		Over \$10K to < \$50K (PSC) OR \$100K (TSC)	\$50K (PSC) OR \$100K (TSC) to \$1M - Non-IT	DIS/Governor's Office Review Over \$100K - IT	Governor's Office Review Over \$1 Million
1	Contract Routing Form Approvals	10	10	10	10
2	Finance Office Processing	3	3	3	3
3	Governor's Office/DIS Pre-Bid Reviews	0	0	22	11
4	Bidding, Review, Selection & Appeal Period	5	44	44	44
5	State Procurement Processing	5	5	5	5
6	Governor's Office/DIS Post-Bid Reviews	0	0	22	11
7	Reviews by PEER/Review Committees (Varies by time of month, etc.)	0	15	15	15
8	DFA Signing	5	5	5	5
Total # of Work/Calendar Days - Not Sole Source		28/38 ~ 5 Weeks	82/112 ~ 4 Months	126/172 ~ 6 Months	104/142 ~ 5 Months
Time Required if Sole Source Requested & Denied		~10 Weeks	~ 5 Months	~ 7 Months	~ 6 Months
Time Required if Sole Source Request Approved		~ 9 Weeks	~ 3 Months	~ 5 Months	~ 4 Months
Time Required If Contracting with State Entity		~ 1 Month	~ 2 Months	~ 4 Months	~ 3 Months



Process for Contracted Services < \$50,000

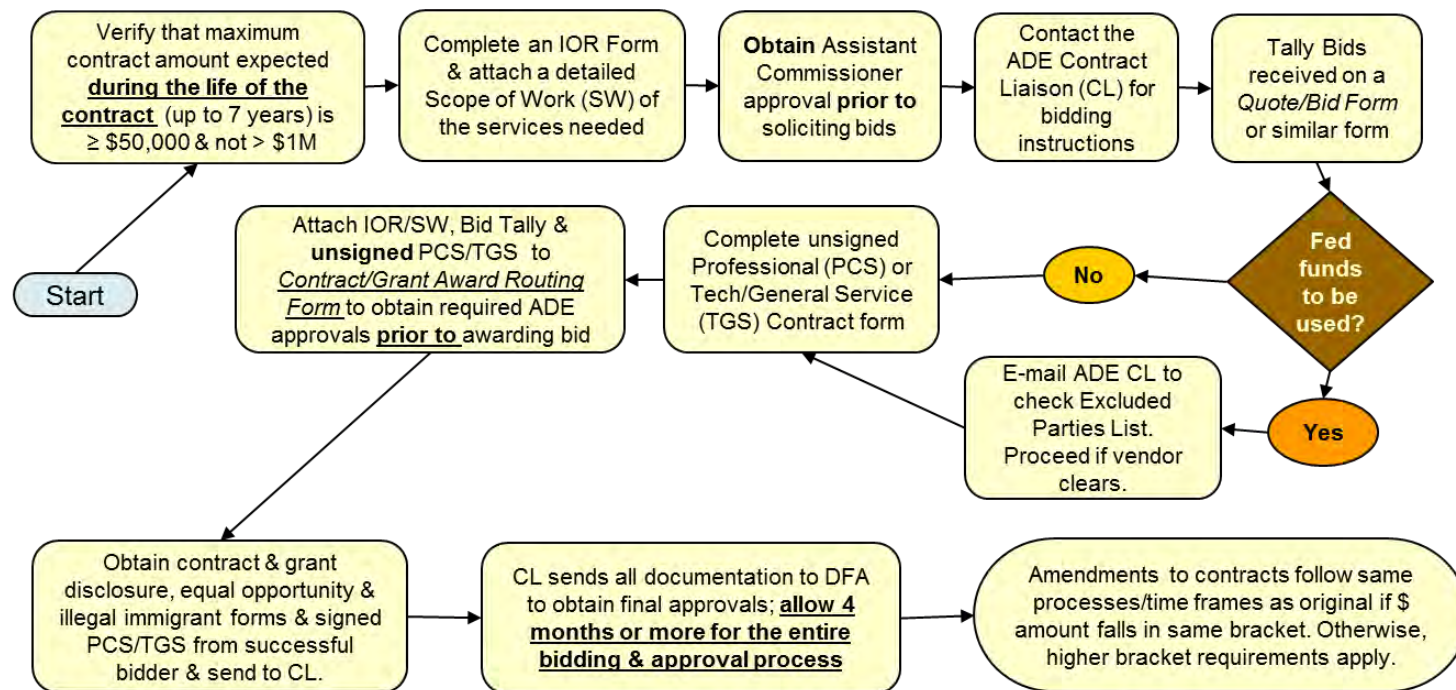


* - Contract & Grant Disclosure Form, Equal Opportunity Statement, Illegal Immigrant Certification and Excluded Party List check required when amount exceeds \$25K.

This flowchart is a guide. See the ADE Financial Policy and Procedures Manual and the State Financial Management Guide for more details.



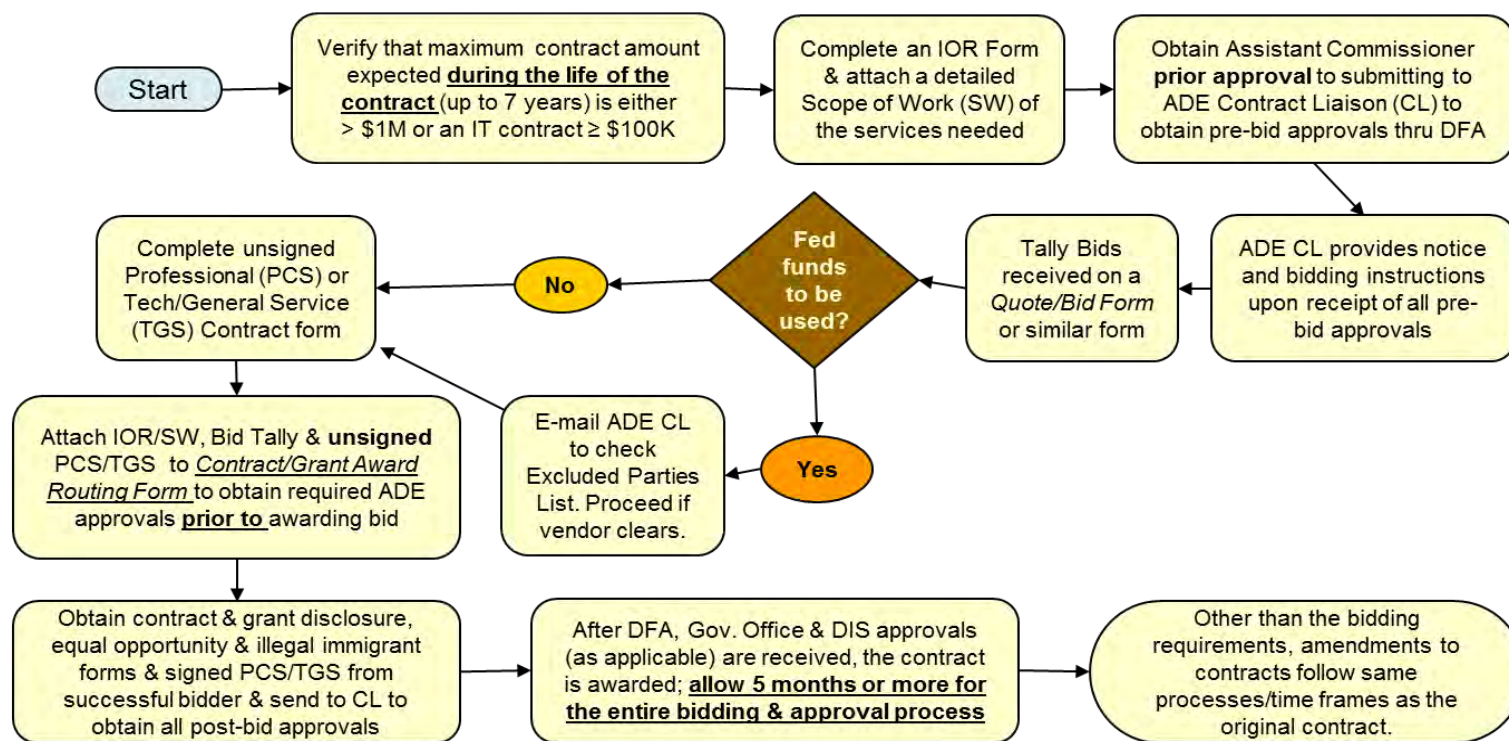
Process for Contracted Services \geq \$50,000 up to \$1 Million (Excluding IT Contracts \geq \$100,000)



This flowchart is a guide. See the ADE Financial Policy and Procedures Manual and the State Financial Management Guide for more details.



Process for Contracted Services > \$1Million or IT ≥ \$100,000



This flowchart is a guide. See the ADE Financial Policy and Procedures Manual and the State Financial Management Guide for more details.

BID & APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PURCHASING GOODS & CONTRACTED SERVICES:

NOTE: Allow up to **5 months lead-time** for obtaining approvals and bidding information technology purchases or contracts expected to amount to \$100,000 or more and on any purchases or contracts expected to amount to over \$1 million. Approval to bid must be obtained from DFA, DIS and the Governor's Office prior to bidding on purchases or contracts expected to exceed these amounts.

These amounts apply even if the first year of the contract will be less than the \$100K or \$1 million, if renewals are expected for up to six more years that will cause these amounts to be reached. For example, an information technology contract amounting to \$15,000 for the first year and each of the following six years (7 X \$15,000 = \$105,000) meets this requirement.

- **Goods or services costing less than \$10,000:** No quotes or bids are required. However, verbal quotes from at least two suppliers are encouraged, and Unit Managers are responsible for ensuring that purchases result in good value for the State and in good stewardship of public funds.
- **Goods or services costing from \$10,000 to \$49,999.99:** must be quote bid, or sole source justification provided, if quote bidding is not possible. Managers must obtain at least three written quotes. Fax or emailed quotes are acceptable. Verbal quotes are also acceptable, however, a tally sheet listing the bids or quotes should be attached to the IOR (Interoffice request form), along with a justification, if recommending someone other than the low bidder for the award. The tally sheet must contain the names of the vendors, the name of the person providing the quote for each vendor, the amount quoted and the date of the quote. A *Quote/Bid Form* is available on the Employee Intranet to use for this purpose.

When obtaining quote bids e-mail is preferred over fax machine in order to better communicate with the bidder and expedite the process. Make every effort to include a minority vendor in the solicitation process. Attach all supporting documentation to the *Quote/Bid Form* when submitting with the IOR. Bid award contracts should only be signed by an Assistant Commissioner or their designee. Contact the ADE Purchasing Agent for assistance.

- **Goods or services amounting to \$50,000 or more:** Either Competitive Sealed Bids or Competitive Sealed Requests for Proposals are required, unless the vendor can be justified as a sole source provider. The Request for Proposal requires the use of an evaluation committee and is used when factors other than price are important, but the Administrator of DFA-OSP must provide prior approval for using this bidding method.

- **Purchases of Goods:** Complete an IOR providing a clear description of the desired goods. Attach additional pages, screen shots of web pages and/or other documentation that clearly identifies in laymen's terms the goods needed. Obtain approval of the IOR by your Assistant Commissioner only (no designees) prior to soliciting bids for any goods expected to cost \$50,000 or more. Additional approvals using a Contract/Grant Award Routing Form are required prior to awarding the purchase of the goods to the successful bidder.
- **Purchases of Services:** Attach a detailed Scope of Work to an IOR that provides a clear written description of the services that are required.
 - A Professional Services Contract or Technical and General Services form is required if the professional or technical service contract exceeds \$10,000.
 - Approvals on a completed IOR by an Assistant Commissioner only (no designees) are required prior to bidding contracts expected to cost \$50,000 or more during the life of the contract (up to seven years), including any reimbursable expenses.
 - Additional approval using a Contract/Grant Award Routing Form is required prior to awarding the contract to the successful bidder.

Contact the ADE Contract Liaison for information on what type of bidding process to use on contracts expected to cost \$50,000 or more; or if you have questions regarding whether a contract is considered professional or technical services in order to determine the type of contract form to use.

Any contracts (other than with government agencies and educational institutions) exceeding **\$25,000** require completion of a Contract and Grant Disclosure and Certification Form, as well as a copy of the contractor's current Equal Opportunity policy statement and an Illegal Immigrant Certification stating they will not employ or contract with any illegal immigrant(s) in their contract with the State.

Contact the ADE Purchasing Agent or *Contract Liaison* for assistance with purchasing items requiring either competitive sealed bids or competitive sealed proposals.

- **Sole source purchases** are those, which by virtue of the performance specifications are available from a single source. Contact the ADE Contract Liaison for specific justification requirements if you believe a provider is a sole source provider. Divisions are encouraged to advertise for bids rather than submit a sole source request, as this will likely result in a faster approval process than a sole source request.
- Services should be obtained from other State agencies/institutions when possible, and quotes or bids are not required.

- A purchase must not be split into two or more orders so that the bidding and approval requirements are circumvented. [If the scope of work differs significantly on two or more contracts with the same provider, then executing multiple contracts (each containing a different scope of work) with a provider would not be considered split purchasing.]
- The above dollar limit (\$10,000 and above) bidding practices pertain to the total value of the purchases of **goods** anticipated from the same vendor for the same type of goods within the same fiscal year.
- The total dollar limit involved with bidding practices for contracted services is considered to be the total cost of services (including any reimbursable expenses) anticipated from the same consultant or service provider for all years (up to seven) that contractor might be used.
- Sales or use taxes should not be considered when comparing quotes or bids.

REVIEW & APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTRACTS:

Definition of Contracted Services – management has no control over the day-to-day activities of the contractor providing the services. A job is awarded to a contractor to perform within a particular time range, and it is up to the contractor to determine how to get it done. Unit managers can oversee the project to ensure the contractor's performance is satisfactory, but day-to-day supervision of workers remains with the contractor.

If day-to-day supervision is required to get a job done, it is an employee-employer relationship according to the IRS, and the services should be obtained through an extra help or regular salaried position. **Temporary services agencies** may be used but **must be limited to a period no longer than six consecutive weeks or 240 hours per calendar quarter. In no event may temporary personnel be authorized to work more than 40 hours in a week.**

A former ADE or State of Arkansas employee may not contract with the agency for a period of one year after employment is terminated.

Clarification of Contract vs Grant – Sometimes this distinction is difficult to define. Generally, contracts with government or quasi-government agencies for providing services to LEAs or students, rather than directly to the ADE, may be considered grants. A grant passes money to carry out a public purpose. It does not involve the acquisition of goods or services for the ADE's direct benefit or use, as a contract does. If in doubt concerning whether an agreement should be requested as a contract or a grant, please contact the Finance Office.

Definition of Professional/Consulting Services – services delivered by a professional typically involving the accounting, administration, campaign advertising, education, engineering, legal or medical areas of expertise. Link for [PCS form](#).

Definition of Technical & General Services – services deemed to be more technical than professional. Examples are computer/technology, Praxis assessments, scoring and administering standardized tests, court reporting, janitorial, lawn care, security, translation/interpreter and video production services. Link for [TGS form](#).

For a total amount of less than **\$10,000.00**, a Purchase Order may be used without the need for a contract form. However, the use of a contract form is recommended to ensure a clear understanding of what is expected by both parties to the contract. If there is a possibility that the contract will be later amended to equal or exceed \$10,000, a contract form should be completed on the front end, even if the amount is less than \$10,000.

Any contracts **exceeding \$25,000** require the contractor (other than government agencies and educational institutions) prior to award of the contract to provide an *Equal Opportunity Statement*, *Illegal Immigrant Certification* form and *Contract and Grant Disclosure and Certification Form*. *The Illegal Immigrant Certification form is for*

certifying that they do not employ or contract with any illegal immigrant(s) in its contract with the State.

The total dollar limit involved with bidding practices for contracted services is considered to be the total cost of services anticipated from the same consultant or service provider for all years (up to seven) that contractor might be used.

The Sole Source justification policy is on the OSP website. However, approvals for sole source providers require convincing justification that only one qualified provider is available to perform the required services. This justification is required on contracts that equal or exceed \$10,000. Divisions are encouraged to advertise for bids rather than submit a sole source request, as this will likely result in a faster approval process than a sole source request.

The Finance Office will review all contract forms to ensure all requirements have been met and will forward the approved contract form for additional ADE approvals. The original signed copy must be returned to the Finance Office for filing.

EXTENDING/AMENDING CONTRACTS:

Units with Professional or Technical & General Services Contracts that need to be amended must complete a contract amendment form for the contract to continue without interruption. An amendment should be done to extend the contract deadline (often required before the end of a fiscal year), even if the monetary amount will not change. Here are links for [PCS](#) and [TGS](#) amendment forms.

The lead time for the amendment is the same as was required when the original contract was submitted. For contracts that start July 1, the amendment form **must be completed by** February 28 in order to obtain legislative review and DFA approval by the end of June. If timelines are not met, the contract will lapse and a new contract will have to be done. Likewise, an amendment form should be completed at least **four months prior to the contract expiration date** on any other Professional or Technical Service Contract (that does not have a June 30 expiration date) for which the term needs to be extended.



A NEW VISION FOR ARKANSAS EDUCATION



WORKING TOGETHER TO ADVANCE EDUCATION

VISION:

Our vision
is that *every*
Arkansas student
will graduate
prepared
for success in
COLLEGE
and the
WORKPLACE.

What Great Looks Like



When the bus pulls up to the stop, Marcus and his mother are waiting.

He gets a quick hug from Mom, then a high-five from Ms. Susan, the bus driver, before heading off to school. When they get there, a volunteer who owns a café in town greets the kids and helps monitor the parking lot.

Marcus walks in carrying a book assigned for class, hoping to read a few extra pages before the bell rings. Sure, he's two chapters ahead, but it's getting really good! Breakfast is whole-grain blueberry muffins with fruit and milk – one of his favorites – so the book might have to wait for a little while.

Marcus's teacher, Mrs. Raines, is busy putting the finishing touches on a new multiplication relay the class is going to play this morning. They'll analyze the results on school tablets afterward. During their weekly collaboration time, she and her fellow teachers have been working on ways to incorporate active games into math lessons. This is just the thing some of her kids need to make those math facts really stick.

Later, Marcus and several friends are going on a nature scavenger hunt with the afterschool program, plus working on creating slide presentations. They'll do homework, too, but Marcus doesn't mind. Mr. Clarkson will be there to help him check his writing (and then teach him some more chess moves).

Mom picks him up on the way home from work, and Marcus spends the entire trip telling her about this new computer design project. Mrs. Raines showed him a website with pictures of famous buildings. She said he could be an architect one day, and that sounds like a pretty cool career.



About ForwARd

ForwARd Arkansas is a partnership of education, business, government and community members committed to improving public education in our state. The group, guided by a steering committee, has conducted extensive research and is encouraging statewide discussion and activities aimed at strengthening public education.

ForwARd is organized by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Walton Family Foundation and Arkansas Board of Education. The steering committee is made up of the following individuals, all of whom voted and approved these recommendations:

Steering Committee

Ana Aguayo, Board Member, Citizens First Congress

Shane Broadway, Vice President for University Relations, Arkansas State University

Deborah Coffman, Chief of Staff, Arkansas Department of Education

Toby Daugherty, Lead Recruiter and Outreach Coordinator, The STAND Foundation

Bill Dillard III, Vice President, Dillard's Inc.

Marcy Doderer, President and CEO, Arkansas Children's Hospital

Matt Dozier, President and CEO, Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST) Initiative

Bob East, Co-Founder, East-Harding Inc.

Joyce Elliot, Arkansas State Senator

Melanie Fox, Co-Founder, J&M Foods

Diana Gonzales Worthen, Director, Project RISE at University of Arkansas at Fayetteville

Lavina Grandon, Founder and President, Rural Community Alliance

Ginny Kurrus, Former State President, Arkansas Parent-Teacher Association

Michele Linch, Executive Director, Arkansas State Teachers Association

Hugh McDonald, President and CEO, Entergy Arkansas Inc.

Justin Minkel, Elementary School Teacher, Jones Elementary School in Springdale

David Rainey, Former Superintendent, Dumas Public Schools

John Riggs IV, President, J.A. Riggs Tractor Company

Brenda Robinson, President, Arkansas Education Association

Scott Shirey, Founder and Executive Director, KIPP Delta Public Schools

Ray Simon, Former Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education

Kathy Smith, Senior Program Officer, Walton Family Foundation

Leandro Braslavsky Soldi, Finance Director, Hispanic Community Services Inc.

LaDonna Spain, School Improvement Specialist, Arkansas Department of Education

Joy Springer, Student Advocate

Sherece West-Scantlebury, President and CEO, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Darrin Williams, CEO, Southern Bancorp Inc.

Kenya Williams, Co-Chair, Strong-Community Leadership Alliance

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: Page 4

Get to know us better. We want you to know who we are and what we are trying to do. Want more information? Contact us at info@forwardarkansas.org.

OUR PROCESS: Pages 5-7

Hundreds of hours of research and discussion have been invested in developing these recommendations. We want you to understand our process and how we reached these recommendations.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO: Pages 8-9

Every good vision starts with a goal, and every good goal has measurable results. This section explains our goal and how we plan to measure the results of our efforts.

AREAS OF FOCUS: Pages 10-51

After defining the seven areas of focus, the group directed its research efforts on fully understanding those areas. This section is divided into the seven areas of focus and explains the importance of the focus area, research on current Arkansas education, and aspirations and recommendations for the future.

The recommendations for each focus area are divided into a few different categories. “Foundational recommendations” are those deemed by the steering committee to be the most critical to improving Arkansas education. “Quick wins” are faster to accomplish and will get results quickly. Other recommendations might not fall into either category, but are still important.

1) Pre-K	12
2) Teaching & Learning	16
3) Teacher Pipeline	20
4) Effective Leadership	26
5) Support Beyond the Classroom	32
6) Academically Distressed Schools	36
7) Systems & Policies	46

CONCLUSION: Pages 52-53

This section explains how implementing these recommendations can affect Arkansans and how you can get involved. Will you join us?

Introduction

We want every day to be a great day for Arkansas students. What does great look like? It looks like Marcus – and thousands of children like him – being happy, healthy and excited about learning. It looks like teachers who are supported and prepared. It looks like parents who are engaged and invested. It looks like progress. Arkansas has the ability to do all of this and more for students in every corner of the state – and that will change everything. More students graduating from college. A better, prepared workforce. Higher incomes. Increased prosperity. Education is where it all begins.

The ForwARd State of Education in Arkansas Report, made public in January 2015, highlighted opportunities for improvement in Arkansas education based on in-depth analysis of school readiness, academic performance and college outcomes. The research was clear: Arkansas is making gains to increase access to pre-K and college, but kindergarten readiness and college completion rates are still low. On nationally administered tests of students in fourth- and eighth-grade math and reading, the average scores in Arkansas are below national averages.

While the report identified clear gaps affecting our students, simply recognizing those gaps in Arkansas education will not close them. To close the gaps and move all students to excellence, we need a new vision for education in Arkansas.

To create realistic, workable recommendations that are tailored to Arkansas, the ForwARd team relied on input from students, teachers, administrators, community and business leaders, parents and more. Working together, the steering committee developed a vision that every Arkansas student will graduate prepared for success in college and the workplace. To measure progress toward that vision, the steering committee established a strategic goal, metrics and targets.

VISION:

Our vision is that every Arkansas student will graduate prepared for success in college and the workplace.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Becoming a leading state in education by improving student achievement at a historically ambitious yet achievable rate and closing the achievement gap within a generation.

They then selected seven areas of focus where changes will make the biggest impact on Arkansas education. Based on the research and feedback outlined in this document, the ForwARd team has created a list of recommendations for each of the focus areas: pre-K, teaching and learning, teacher pipeline, effective leadership, support beyond the classroom, academic distress, and systems and policies. Implementing these recommendations fully and consistently should result in a dramatic improvement in Arkansas education.

These recommendations are informed by Arkansans across the state and reflect the rigorous efforts of a diverse steering committee. As the recommendations are implemented, it may be necessary to make adjustments based on the values and aspirations of the steering committee and ForwARd's commitment to excellence for every student in Arkansas.

Our Process

Since November 2014, the ForwARd team has been gathering information about the state of education in Arkansas. Our first set of findings is outlined in the State of Education in Arkansas Report, published in January 2015. Below is a summary of the key findings from the report. The full report can be read at ForwardArkansas.org.

Findings From State of Education in Arkansas

1 Access

Arkansas has been successful in improving access to education and in increasing participation in higher-level educational activities.

- ▶ **Pre-K Access:** Top 20 nationally
- ▶ **High School Graduation Rate:** Above national average
- ▶ **AP Exams & ACT:** Very large increase in participating students
- ▶ **College-Going Rate:** Top 20 nationally

2 Standards

Arkansas has established policies and standards that should support improved student outcomes.

- ▶ **Common Core:** Arkansas is now four years into the implementation of this rigorous college-ready standards program
- ▶ **Principal & Teacher Licensure & Training:** Arkansas has been recognized as a leader in developing standards in these areas
- ▶ **Per-Pupil Expenditure:** Arkansas's per-pupil expenditure has increased in recent years and is near national average

3 Outcomes

Student outcomes are still far below aspirations across the state; opportunity exists to improve.

- ▶ **Pre-K:** For low-income children who attended pre-K, only 18 percent were considered “developed” in all six Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI) categories: 31 percent in at least five categories, 43 percent in at least four categories and 57 percent in three or less categories
- ▶ **Fourth- and Eighth-Grade:** Bottom 20 nationally in math and literacy test scores – and that rank has dropped since 2005
- ▶ **College Graduation Rate:** 39 percent (48th in the nation)

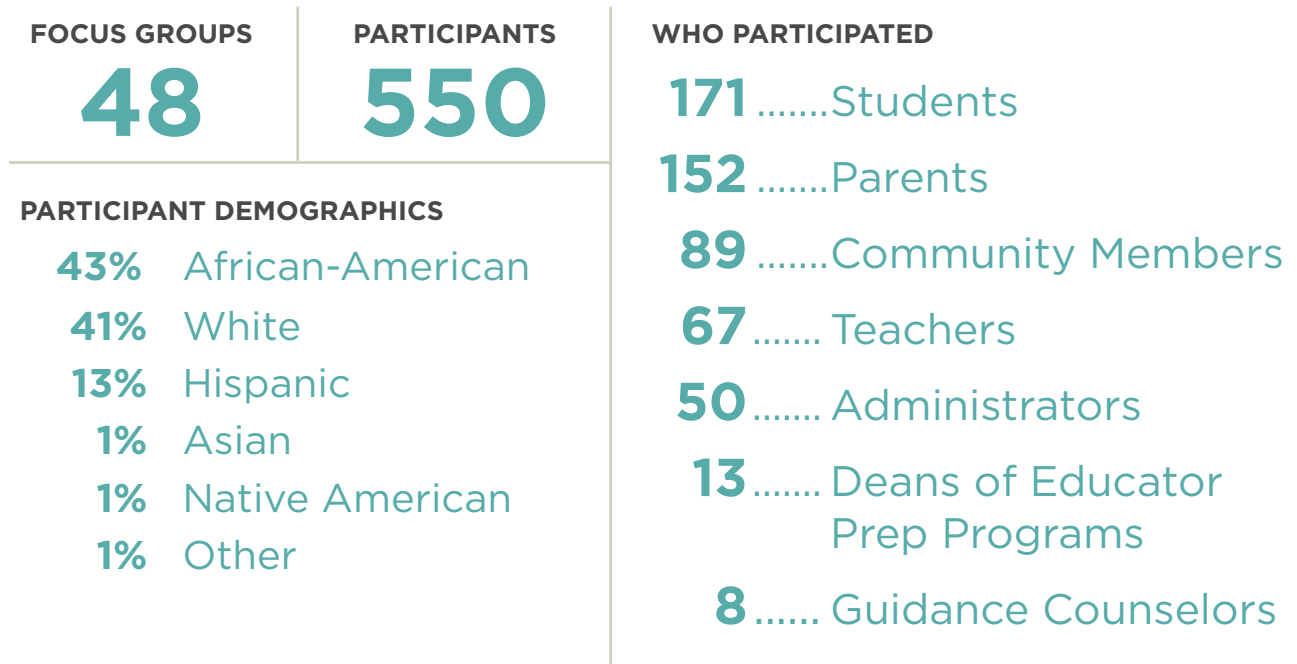
4 Achievement Gap

Despite recent gains, the achievement gap is still significant, and this is reflected in economic, racial and regional disparities.

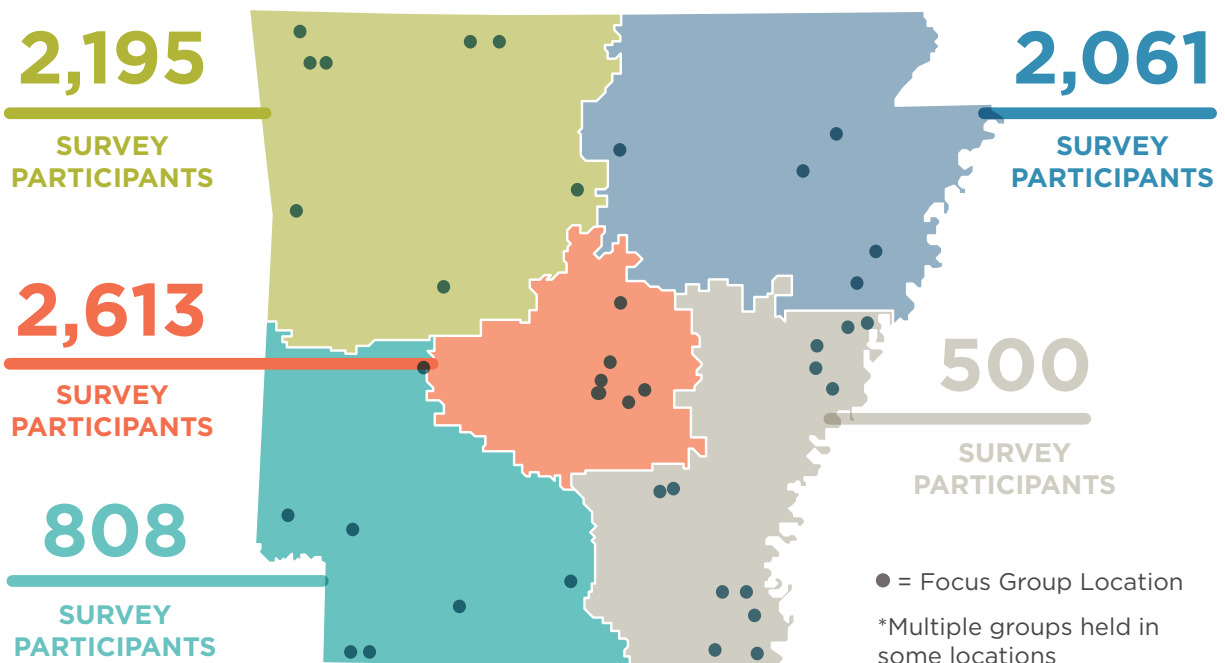
- ▶ **Low-Income & Minority Students:** Perform below other students on national tests, although the gap has narrowed since 2005
- ▶ **Regional Achievement:** Southeast has lowest average but largest gains; Central has largest disparity and concentration of academically distressed schools
- ▶ **Pockets of Performance:** Across Arkansas, there are pockets of high and low performance suggesting opportunity to spread what already works well statewide

After compiling data on Arkansas education, ForwARd gained valuable insight by conducting interviews, surveys and focus groups with a wide variety of Arkansans. Their input helped us better understand the challenges and opportunities in Arkansas education. We sought to capture diverse perspectives on best practices and challenges by conducting interviews, surveys and focus groups, including:

Focus Groups: Who Provided Input

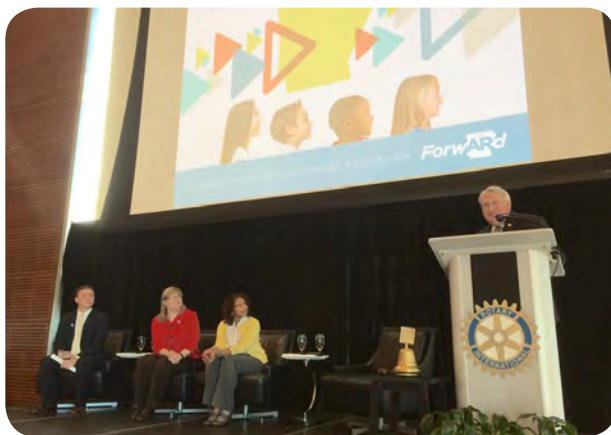
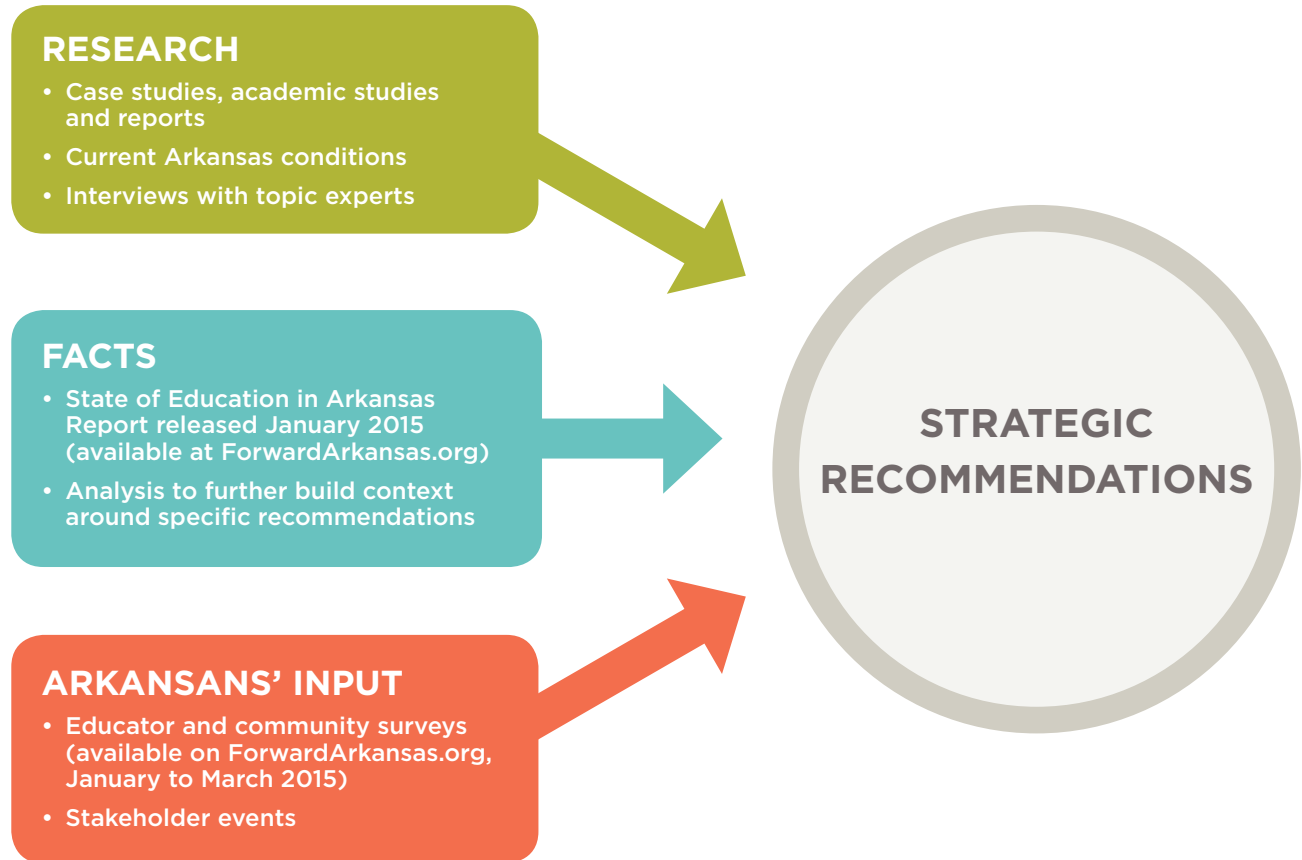


Where Input Came From



Over 90 percent of districts and 70 percent of schools are represented in the survey results.

We believe that there are nuances to Arkansas education that go above and beyond what statistics and data can convey. What is working in our state? What isn't? What do Arkansans aspire to? Firsthand insight is critical to our future success. That is why we used all of the information collected through online surveys and form submissions, focus groups, community events and interviews with experts in the field to ultimately shape the recommendations.



Where We Want to Go

To ensure we are making progress toward our strategic goal – and ultimately our vision – we need measurable checkpoints along the way. Metrics also show our progress, or lack thereof, so we can know if student needs are being met and if schools are moving in the right direction. As a state, we must compare our student achievement to what other states, and ultimately other nations, prove is achievable. Why? Because our kids deserve the best.

Of course, setting state metrics and targets does not take the place of individual schools and districts setting their own goals and measures that provide local insight.

Unfortunately, measuring progress in education is difficult. Currently, there is not a set of metrics available that we feel measures progress holistically. For example, there is no established metric for measuring how prepared students are for the workplace. Until we can develop better metrics, we must continue to rely on existing assessments, rankings and test scores. But we will use them in a new way.

Traditional metrics have long been used to hold educators and students accountable. For many, these metrics feel like the center of the educational universe around which everything else revolves. Now it's time to use available metrics to hold ourselves accountable. Legislators, school boards, community members, parents – we all have a responsibility to our students and educators. To assess progress toward that end, we recommend using the following metrics:

METRICS FOR STRATEGIC GOAL:

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Average Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI) score for Free and Reduced Lunch students attending ABC/Head Start

QELI is an observational tool for use in the primary grades to identify student development in six areas related to school learning. The inventory observes behaviors developed in school so observations can be used to inform instruction and improve achievement.

MIDDLE SCHOOL READINESS

Fourth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading rank

HIGH SCHOOL READINESS

Eighth-grade National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) math rank. NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subject areas.

COLLEGE READINESS

Arkansas's national ACT rank among states with more than 50 percent participation in the ACT

The ACT is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in English, mathematics, reading and science.

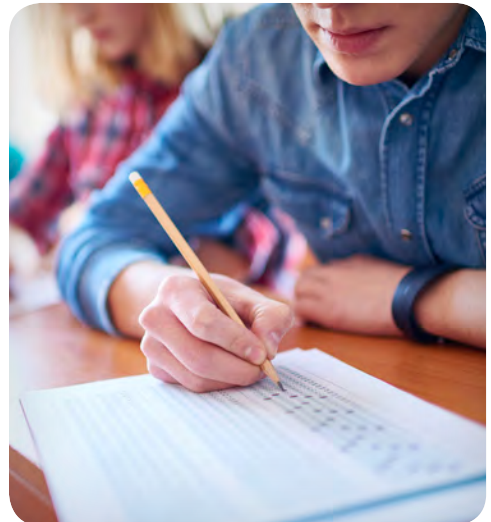
POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Two- and four-year college graduation rate national rank

Tracking Progress¹

In order to reach our goal, Arkansas will have to make substantial gains at all levels – pre-K, elementary, middle school, high school and college – over the next 25 years. With this in mind, we set target metrics at each level to track both parts of our goal: raising overall achievement and eliminating the achievement gap.

For example, Arkansas's NAEP fourth-grade reading score must improve by 1.4 points each year for Arkansas to be ranked fifth in the nation by 2041, and the achievement gap must decrease by .97 points each year to be eliminated by 2041. These projected gains are based on the assumption that other states will continue to improve at the national average growth rate, and that Arkansas meets its annual goals. Maintaining this rate of improvement will be a challenge, but it is possible. Consider our target fourth-grade reading score improvement of 1.4 points per year. At least three states have improved at this rate or faster over the last 10 years.



Areas of Focus

How We Get There

The following pages include a detailed explanation of each of the areas of focus for which we have created specific recommendations. Each area of focus is divided into three categories: importance of the focus area, research on current Arkansas education, and aspirations and recommendations for the future of Arkansas education. Below is an overview for each section.

1 Pre-K

All students, starting with those in highest need, have access to high-quality early childhood learning opportunities so they arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

- Starting with lowest-income areas, improve quality of programs to meet new, high standards.
- Then, increase access to pre-K in areas of shortage.

2 Teaching & Learning

Each student is supported in developing the full range of knowledge and skills she/he needs to be successful in college and career. All schools have a culture of mutual respect, high expectations for all, teamwork and continuous growth.

- Embed more high-quality teacher collaboration in schools.
- Establish workforce education pathways that provide college credit during high school and prepare students for both career and higher education options.
- Improve testing in a way that maintains academic rigor, uses classroom time thoughtfully, informs teaching, and measures student progress holistically.

3 Teacher Pipeline

All schools, especially those in high-need areas, have access to talented educators who have been rigorously prepared.

- Build homegrown teaching talent by expanding programs like Teacher Cadet.
- Expand pathways for nontraditional educators without sacrificing quality.
- Attract top talent to high-need schools and subjects by improving incentives.

4 Support Beyond the Classroom

All students and families, starting with those in highest need, have access to and support in accessing the nutritional and health resources needed to come to school ready to learn.

- Increase access to nutrition by implementing healthy breakfast as a part of the school day.
- Provide high-risk children and families improved support in navigating access to quality health care services.

5 Leadership

All education leaders put students at the center of their decisions, work tirelessly to build and support a team, deploy resources effectively, and hold themselves and their team accountable for enabling all children to be successful.

- Empower principals to set a shared vision, and manage staff and resources to reach it.
- Support implementation of a rigorous administrator evaluation system.
- Expand rigorous preparation programs and mentorship.
- Focus school board training on good governance; align board elections with general election.

6 Academic Distress

All schools in academic distress and pre-academic distress receive support and interventions that enable them to transform their school cultures, dramatically improve student achievement, and sustain their improvement over time.

- Create a transparent process that proactively identifies schools approaching distress.
- Empower one unit at the ADE and staff it with top talent to manage the process.
- Measure progress holistically (not just test scores) and share with the community.

7 Systems & Policies

All school districts have sufficient funding and use resources in a way that most effectively supports student success. Policies enable the implementation of recommendations needed for Arkansas to become a leading state in education.

- Streamline the regulatory burden (on teachers and administrators, educator prep programs, ADE) to enable a focus on instruction, encourage innovation, and support a mindset shift from compliance to excellence.
- Improve district capabilities to make decisions based on evidence of educational impact.
- Over time, increase funding to support educational excellence, tying incremental increases to evidence of effective resource use.

Why It's Important

High-quality pre-K is crucial for preparing children to succeed. This stance is supported by the most respected national research, as well as by Arkansas student outcomes data. Research shows that the benefits of a high-quality pre-K program last through adulthood – particularly for students growing up in poverty. While developing academic skills like reading is important, it's about more than learning to read – pre-K also helps develop social skills and the ability to self-regulate. Investment in high-quality pre-K programs will prevent delays for many children, thus the need for remediation in later grades.²

“The children coming to kindergarten without pre-K instruction are performing significantly lower than their peers.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)



Pre-K in Arkansas Today

Pre-K Quality³

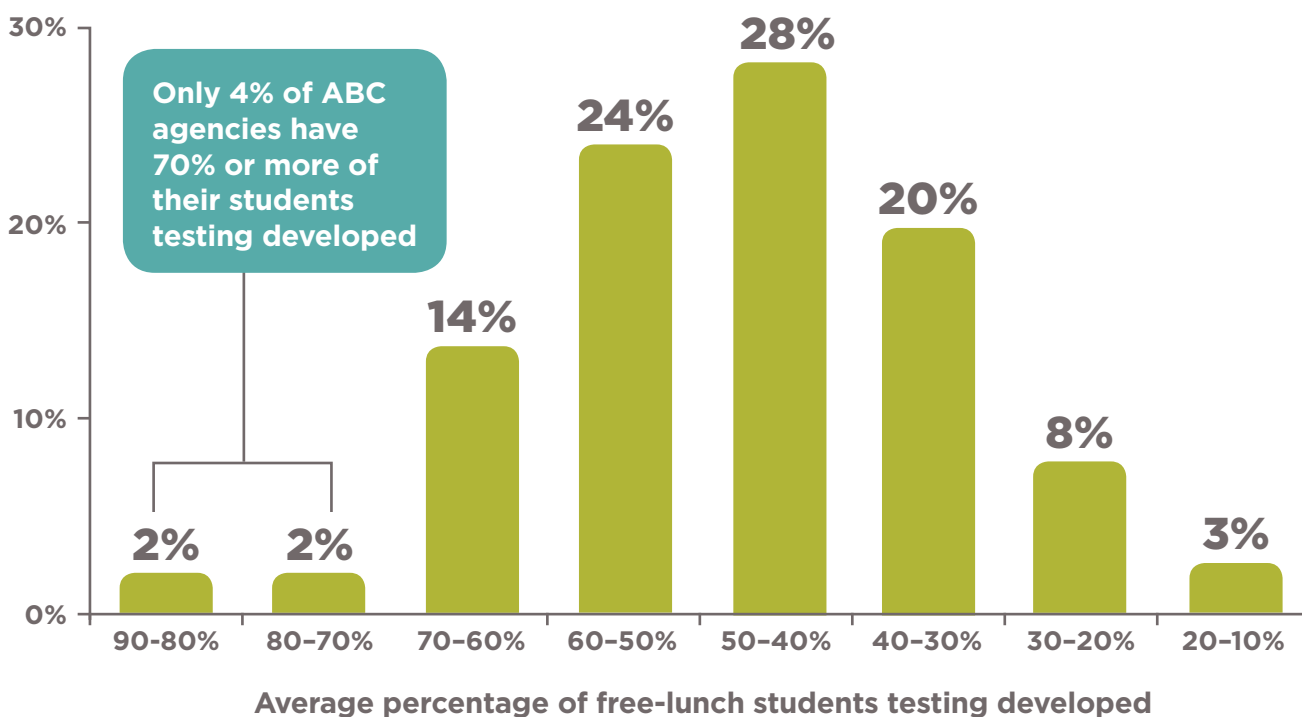
The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program is designed to support high-quality pre-K programming that helps at-risk children develop intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. This program mainly consists of students from families with incomes under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL).

In Arkansas, 49 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds attend pre-K, which is in keeping with the national average of 48 percent. However, there is a vast difference in the performance of students from different pre-K programs.

To understand the difference in programs, we looked at student outcomes with family income below 100 percent of the FPL. In the top third of programs, more than 70 percent of low-income students test as developed on the Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI). QELI is an observational tool for use in the primary grades to identify student development in six areas related to school learning. The inventory observes behaviors developed in school so observations can be used to inform instruction and improve achievement. However, the bottom third of ABC providers have fewer than 30 percent of low-income students reach that same goal.

Students From ABC Agencies Testing Developed*

Percentage of
ABC agencies



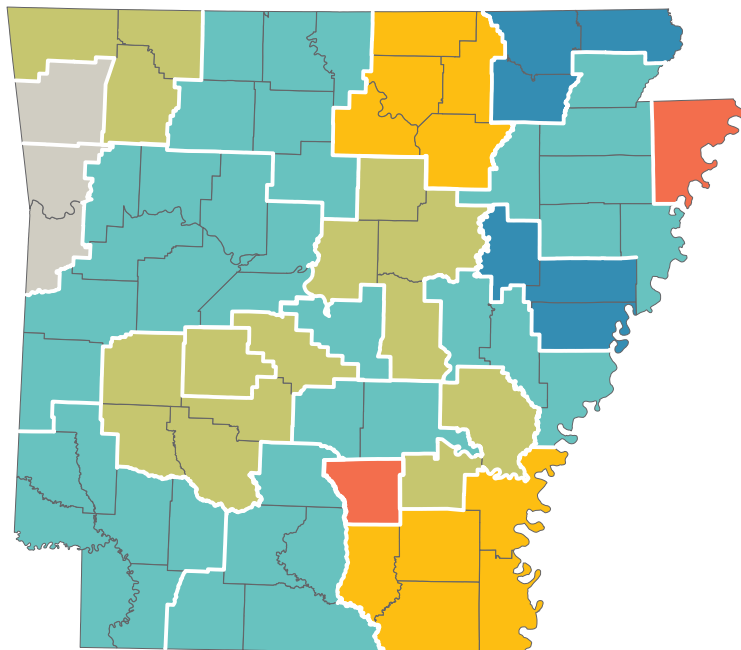
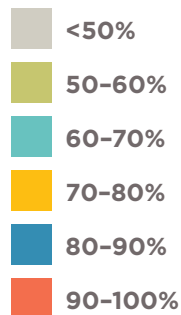
*Based on Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI)

Pre-K Availability⁴

Not all students who are eligible for an ABC program have the opportunity to attend. Why? There simply aren't enough seats. Arkansas has the capacity to accommodate 62 percent of low-income 4-year-olds in either an ABC or Head Start program. However, this availability varies widely by region.

In some regions, there are enough seats to accommodate every child under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line. Yet two Arkansas jurisdictions do not have enough seats for even half of the eligible students. Counties in northwest Arkansas are among those with the least capacity compared to the population of eligible students.

Percentage of 4-year-old FRL students covered by ABC or Head Start pre-K⁵



White outlines = Jurisdictions
Black outlines = Counties

Pre-K Performance Over Time

To fully understand the importance of early childhood education, it is crucial to have data that demonstrates the long-term impact on students. However, currently, no system exists statewide to link pre-K student enrollment with K-12 performance in order to measure long-term effectiveness of pre-K programs.

Where We Want to Go

Aspiration

All students, starting with those in highest need, have access to high-quality early childhood learning opportunities so they arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

Recommendations

FOUNDATIONAL

- ▶ Set clear standards for what high quality means in Arkansas, based on established research, and improve all pre-K seats to meet these new, high-quality standards.
- ▶ Improve longitudinal tracking of student performance, trace outcomes back to specific programs, and actively collect data on barriers faced by families preventing higher enrollment.
- ▶ After all current seats meet high-quality standards, increase number of seats in areas with shortages so all eligible students can attend Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) or Head Start (maximizing use of federal funds; for example, Head Start, funds allocated to daycare, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, etc.).

QUICK WINS

- ▶ Develop or select strong kindergarten readiness indicators.
- ▶ Tightly align Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) and Head Start curricula with strategic goal of kindergarten readiness.
- ▶ Develop marketing program to educate and communicate value of pre-K to parents.

OTHER

- ▶ Move toward goal of ensuring all pre-K teachers have a bachelor's degree and specialized Early Childhood Education training.
- ▶ Conduct analysis to determine if there is need to expand 200 percent Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) threshold for guaranteed pre-K seats.

2

Teaching & Learning

Why It's Important

Empowering teachers to learn and grow in their professional skills is arguably one of the most important ways to create a culture of continuous growth, lift student achievement and make the profession attractive over the long term. But efforts to support and strengthen education – whether in the classroom, online or in the field – must ultimately have a positive impact on student learning. Therefore, being learner-centric must be a top priority in order to maximize resources (time, training, curriculum, funding and more) and support student achievement.

Teaching & Learning in AR Today

Teacher Learning and Development

Through our outreach efforts, Arkansas educators identified a need for professional learning opportunities that are more relevant to their experiences, immediately applicable in the classroom, and interactive. In addition, educators indicated that they learn more when material is delivered by someone who understands what it is like to be a teacher and when learning opportunities are sustained over time.

Educators also identified well-structured collaboration with other educators as an opportunity to learn and grow. This time can be spent developing content skills, agreeing with other educators on standards and expectations, building relationships, and working together to plan specific lessons. However, many educators in Arkansas either don't have time built into the school week to collaborate with their peers or feel that the collaboration time lacks clear objectives.

“We should have collaboration and mentorship for teachers built into the day so teachers can grow continuously.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

Instructional Preparation

In our focus groups and surveys, educators expressed concerns about spending fewer hours than ever before on preparing to teach. As more rules and responsibilities have been introduced – requiring educators to spend more and more time “checking the box” – teachers feel that students must compete with paperwork for time and attention.

Testing

Appropriate, well-planned testing can provide crucial feedback for instruction. Results can be used to identify a student’s learning strengths and needs or to assure that all student groups in a school are making progress in their learning. Either way, testing outcomes can be powerful drivers of data-driven decision-making at all levels to ensure that individual needs are met and district curriculum and instruction alignment is effective.

However, focus groups and survey participants – including Arkansas educators, parents and students – all cite concerns about the current testing environment. We heard that testing takes too much time away from instruction, and that it doesn’t help students develop a full range of knowledge and skills. To address these shared concerns, we need to ensure that testing is useful. How? By eliminating any redundancies and streamlining testing requirements. In addition, testing should be holistic and help students develop the skills they need to succeed beyond the classroom.

Workforce Education

Only about one in five Arkansas students (20 percent) graduates from a two-year college within three years, or a four-year college within six years. This tells us that we have an opportunity to better transition students from K-12 education into and through higher education and the workforce.⁶

One way of doing this is through a workforce education pathway: a program that, beginning in high school, teaches students academic and technical skills needed to succeed in college and/or high-demand, high-opportunity jobs. Students aren’t required to decide up front whether they want to get a job or go to college; instead, they get hands-on experience, earn college credit while still in high school, and keep their future options open. For example, through an advanced manufacturing pathway, a student would have the option to get an advanced manufacturing job after high school, pursue a community college degree, or pursue a bachelor’s degree and beyond.

These programs are often developed in partnership with local community colleges and industries. One example in Arkansas is the Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC), a collaboration of community colleges in eastern Arkansas that partners with businesses to develop industry-driven career and technical training. More than 9,000 individuals, including 1,000 youth, have been provided career-specific training, with employers voicing satisfaction with “dramatic” changes in students’ skill levels.⁷

Where We Want to Go

Aspiration

Each student is supported in developing the full range of knowledge and skills he/she needs to be successful in college and career. All schools have a culture of mutual respect, high expectations for all, teamwork and continuous growth.

Recommendations

FOUNDATIONAL

- Schools should embed meaningful teacher collaboration time into the school day (for example, three hours per week) and provide support to teachers in order to use this time effectively.
- Districts should assess effectiveness of current professional development. For less effective professional development, reinvest time and funds toward more district teacher-driven professional development, observations and coaching.
- Improve testing for students, teachers and schools. The emerging assessment approach should maintain academic rigor, use classroom time thoughtfully (by eliminating redundant or low-priority tests), inform teaching and continuous learning, and measure student progress holistically (including “21st century” higher-order cognitive skills and noncognitive skills).
- Establish workforce education pathways across the state that enable students to earn college credit in high school and pursue career opportunities while preserving options to pursue higher education. For example, through an advanced manufacturing pathway, a student would have the option to get an advanced manufacturing job after high school, pursue a community college degree, or pursue a bachelor’s degree and beyond. Pathways should be developed with consideration of job opportunities in the state and beyond.
- Offer adequate broadband access for all schools, meeting national standards for throughput (100 kbps/student as of 2015). Adequate broadband will enable students and teachers to access online resources and improve teaching and learning.

QUICK WINS

- Introduce more flexibility at state and district levels for what can count toward professional development hours (for example, allow National Board Certified Teachers a degree of flexibility with professional development hours.)
- Reduce and streamline teachers’ tasks to enable them to focus on instruction. Begin with an investigation of current teacher tasks and streamlining opportunities.

OTHER

- ▶ Support the rigorous implementation of standards (for example, Common Core State Standards) through continued professional development provided by the state, Education Service Cooperatives (co-ops) and districts.
- ▶ Offering competitive funding for school and district proposals to implement structural innovations. Research-based structural innovations to consider include implementing a year-round calendar, extending learning time (school day and/or year, with a proportional increase in staff pay), and looping classrooms (having same teacher instruct same students for more than one school year).



Why It's Important

A high-quality teacher has proven to be the single most important in-school factor for student learning, with one influential study suggesting that teacher quality alone could account for anywhere between 7 and 20 percent of the variation in student achievement.⁸ Another study found that simply replacing the least effective 5 to 10 percent of U.S. teachers with just an average-performing counterpart would lead U.S. schools to rise to the top of international rankings.⁹

Building Strong Teachers for Arkansas

- **ATTRACT** the most qualified applicants
- **PREPARE** to the highest standards
- **SUPPORT & DEVELOP** through fair evaluations and strong training and mentoring

“With a great teacher, the kids are excited and learning. Without a great teacher, the kids are bored and not engaged.”

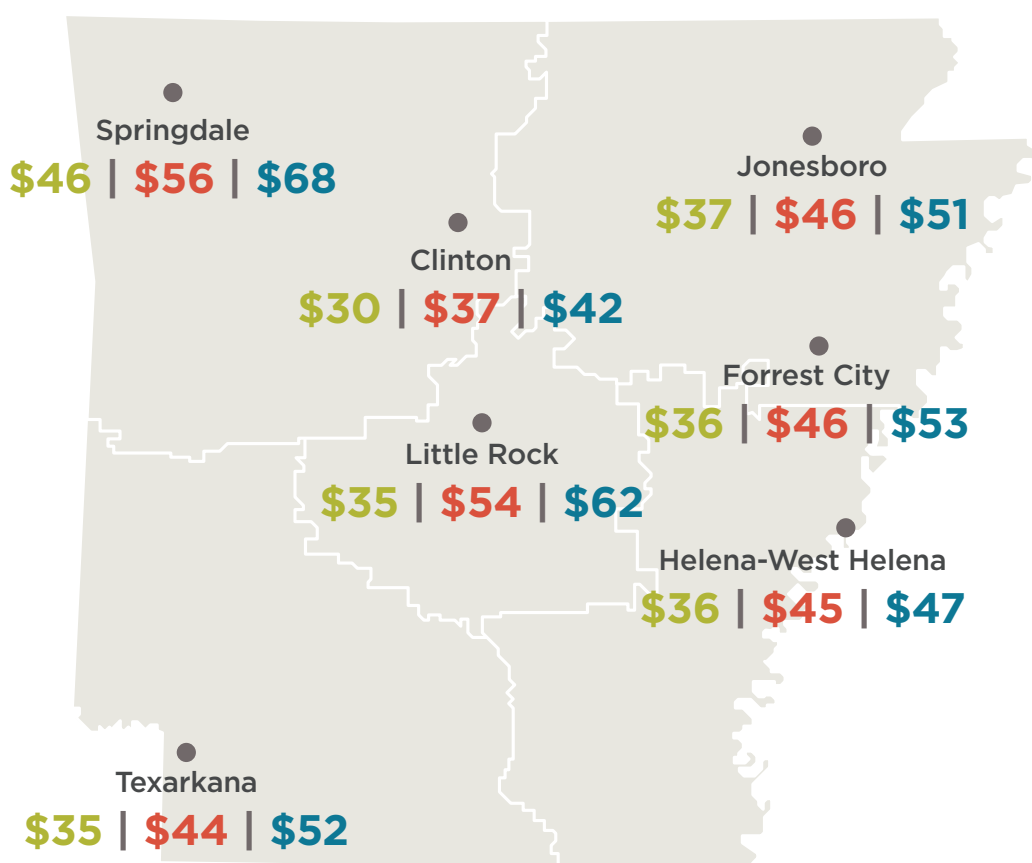
– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

Teacher Pipeline in Arkansas Today

Attracting Teachers

Teachers consider salary, location, leadership and school culture when selecting a school district. Many Arkansas districts report difficulty in attracting teachers to high-need subjects, such as math and computer science, and to various locations across the state. Districts have flexibility to adjust teacher salaries and the chart below shows how those salaries vary statewide.

Teacher Salaries Vary Across the State¹⁰



Salary for length of time working = 0 yrs | 15 yrs | Max

Measured in thousands

Prepare

Traditionally, Arkansas educators are prepared through educator preparation bachelor's degree programs, where students spend four years learning subject matter knowledge, learning how to be a teacher and getting classroom experience. In Arkansas, there are also several alternative educator preparation routes that enable high-potential, nontraditional candidates to become educators and teach in Arkansas's highest-need areas, such as the Arkansas Teacher Corp and Teach for America. There is a need to continue to improve our educator preparation programs, both traditional and alternative, in order to ensure Arkansas's students have the best educators possible.

In our outreach, we heard that while all agree that setting a high standard for educator preparation programs is important, Arkansas's educator preparation programs have been constrained by excess regulations and paperwork that do not help programs prepare educators. This includes redundant paperwork and reporting, as well as excessively detailed and prescriptive requirements around how programs are run (for example, details on which topics are covered and how much time students spend in their internship).

Understanding the effectiveness of an educator preparation program is an important part of helping programs improve. In 2014, Arkansas Department of Education published its first Educator Preparation Performance Report (EPPR) which measures teacher program effectiveness. While currently using limited metrics, the ADE aspires that future EPPRs measure more outcomes, like student growth of program graduates. Providing transparency on outcomes, highlighting effective practices, and offering data-driven improvement suggestions will help improve programs.¹¹

Support and Develop

In 2013, Arkansas passed the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS), a comprehensive and standardized teacher evaluation process, to promote effective teaching and leading in Arkansas schools. The majority of teachers believe TESS in Arkansas is headed in the right direction, but implementation must be well executed for maximum impact. We need to support efforts to ensure that teachers receive effective preparation and are also provided continuous feedback for professional development.

Where We Want to Go

Aspiration

All schools, especially those in high-need areas, have access to talented educators who have been rigorously prepared.

Recommendations

FOUNDATIONAL

- Support the introduction and expansion of programs that encourage talented, local high school students to pursue a teaching credential and enter the teaching profession (for example, the Teacher Cadet Program offers top high school students an opportunity to learn about teaching and get classroom experience with teacher supervision).
- Attract top talent to teach in high-need subjects (for example, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), special education, English as a Second Language (ESL)) and high-need schools by offering districts flexibility to pay these teachers more than stipulated by the salary schedule and by improving the incentives offered. Ensure high-need subjects can be defined locally to account for geographical variation.
- Support expansion of effective alternative educator pathways and subject expert pathways for nontraditional talent to enter the teaching profession without sacrificing quality. Explore additional innovative models from traditional and alternative providers to address the need for talent in high-need subjects and high-need schools.
- Enable both traditional and alternative educator preparation programs to innovate and improve by reviewing and streamlining regulations that do not drive outcomes. More regulatory flexibility could allow for programs with experiential/competency-based learning elements and 3+1 programs where teachers have paid, year-long internships.
- Support state efforts to measure and report the performance of educator preparation programs, including the inclusion of multiple outcome measures such as the student growth of graduates. In addition, encourage the state to hold traditional and alternative educator preparation programs, accountable for their completers/graduates impact on student learning.

QUICK WINS

- Establish centralized educator recruitment resources for potential educators across Arkansas. Develop a state-of-the-art website in order to attract and recruit potential teachers from across the state and beyond.

OTHER

- ▶ In the long term, support substantial additional investment to pay teachers more.
- ▶ Offer funding for educator preparation program proposals to offer support to graduates in their first year of teaching.
- ▶ Enable educator preparation programs to learn from the most highly-rated programs on the educator preparation report card by systematically recognizing, sharing and learning from excellent educator preparation practices. This could be supported by activities at an Arkansas-wide teaching and learning summit.
- ▶ Develop teacher leader roles (especially roles allowing teachers to maintain time in the classroom) to allow effective teachers to take on more responsibility, support school leadership and be compensated more. Teacher leaders should be selected based on rigorous, objective criteria.
- ▶ Support ongoing implementation of a rigorous teacher support and accountability system, such as Teacher Excellence and Support System. Monitor policies and implementation to maintain evaluation accuracy, rigor and fairness, and offer continued administrator professional development.
- ▶ Recognize, celebrate and systematically learn from excellent teaching and excellent teachers (for example, Arkansas-wide teaching and learning summit, public marketing campaign showcasing excellent teachers and their impact).



4

Effective Leadership

Why It's Important

Highly effective principals, assistant principals, superintendents, assistant superintendents, school board members and other district leadership in schools are critical for improving educational outcomes in Arkansas. These leaders use resources well and wisely and are focused on helping students succeed. The recommendations in this section aim to attract, develop and support these effective education leaders, as well as help create the systems needed to enable these leaders to be successful.

▶ Research suggests a principal accounts for **25%** of a school's total impact on student achievement.¹²

Leadership in Arkansas Today

Building Leadership in Arkansas Education

ATTRACT the most qualified applicants
TRAIN to the highest standards
TRUST leadership decisions
HOLD leaders accountable for outcomes

“Great leaders have a respect for teachers and their potential, and will empower them to be successful. What happens in the classroom is a direct reflection of the leadership support.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

Attract

Education leadership roles, especially the principal role, are extremely important – and extremely challenging. While there are many schools in Arkansas with highly effective principals at the helm, there are also many schools where leaders are unable to provide the support needed for students, teachers and staff to be successful. Furthermore, especially in the highest-need areas, leadership turnover is a major challenge. School leadership requires time and stability to develop relationships and to set and take action toward long-term goals.

While we know that educators enter the profession to help students and make a difference, we cannot expect educators to contribute for decades if other aspects of the profession are not sufficiently appealing. It is imperative to make schools and districts a great place to work statewide.

“Leadership attrition is a major problem, especially in high-need communities. It takes time to develop relationships. When people leave, you start different initiatives again.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

Train

Arkansas already has several effective, rigorous programs available to prepare principals. But the educators, families and leaders we heard from want to see Arkansas develop programs that rival the best in the nation. The most effective programs include heavy mentorship and residency components where candidates can see what excellence looks like and learn from the most effective school and district leaders. After principals accept positions, continued support is needed, such as mentoring by highly effective principals and meaningful professional development.

“Experiential learning is far superior for leadership preparation – it requires apprenticeship and on-the-job training.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

Trust and Hold

An individual leader’s effectiveness can be enhanced or constrained by the support he/she receives. While there are many schools and districts where conditions support leaders, there are some that struggle with leadership retention or have specific factors in place that hinder – or even undermine – strong leadership. Some obstacles leaders identified in our outreach include paperwork and regulatory requirements that do not help student achievement, and a lack of decision-making authority and resources to effectively guide student achievement. Leaders also deserve thoughtful evaluations that help them improve.

“As a principal for the past 10 years, I have seen an overwhelming increase in tasks that require a great deal of time but have little impact on student achievement. The principal role has become overwhelming.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

Where We Want to Go

What Great Leadership Looks Like¹³

Effective leaders put students at the center of all their decisions. They work tirelessly to build up a team and provide resources that will enable all children – regardless of background – to be successful beyond their school walls. Effective leaders hold themselves and their team accountable to that end.

AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADER (PRINCIPAL, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AND OTHER LEADER):

- Allocates a substantial majority of time, focus and energy to instructional leadership, as well as building and developing the team

AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM LEADER (SUPERINTENDENT, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT AND OTHER DISTRICT LEADER):

- Is committed to bringing system resources to bear to support schools
- Empowers school leaders to be instructional leaders and managers of their teams; protects schools from undue interference; understands and acts on the principle that one size does not fit all schools
- Ensures all school leaders receive frequent, high-quality coaching and mentorship in being effective instructional leaders and people managers
- Holds school leaders and leadership teams accountable for student outcomes, defined holistically

AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARD:

- Is highly engaged in critical governance activities, including hiring and evaluating the superintendent, setting strategic direction and guiding the system's use of resources
- Empowers system leaders to manage the district in part by backing away from operational details/decisions and focusing on delivery of results

In addition, education leadership needs to be tightly aligned across all levels of the district – from the school leader, to the system leader, to the school board.

Finally, strong leadership needs to be supported by an environment that enables leaders to be successful. Although exceptional leaders can be successful in the most challenging situations, this is not a sustainable or scalable strategy. To enable more education leaders to be successful, they need to be empowered with autonomies to make the most impactful decisions, supported by the system and staff, and held holistically accountable for student success.

Where We Want to Go

Aspiration

All education leaders put students at the center of their decisions, work tirelessly to build and support a team, deploy resources effectively, and hold themselves and their team accountable for enabling all children to be successful.

Recommendations

FOUNDATIONAL

- ▶ In the long term, support additional investment to pay school leaders more. Align compensation increases with evidence of effectiveness.
- ▶ Develop alternative pathways that will enable effective educators to become effective school leaders.
- ▶ Prepare principals to be effective in their role by establishing and supporting existing highly rigorous principal preparation programs and by ensuring novice principals are mentored by highly effective principals.
- ▶ Implement principal support strategies by providing incentives and support for interested schools. Strategies may include 1) creating a school administration manager role to support operations, 2) creating a principal supervisor role to support principals with external needs, and/or 3) developing teacher leader positions for teachers to share leadership responsibilities.
- ▶ Empower principals to partner with school staff in developing a shared vision for instruction in their school and to manage resources important to achieving this vision, including the ability to 1) hire and place staff, 2) remove low-performing staff while ensuring due process, and 3) deploy instructional support resources to meet the school's unique needs.
- ▶ Support the ongoing implementation of a rigorous administrator evaluation system (for example, the Leader Excellence and Development System). Monitor the implementation to make sure system leaders use the evaluation system effectively to provide developmental support and hold administrators accountable for their effectiveness and outcomes.

QUICK WINS

- ▶ Expose Arkansas's education leaders to the highest-performing schools inside and outside the state, and provide them a clear point of reference for what outstanding schools look like.
- ▶ Streamline current paperwork and regulatory requirements for administrators. Although streamlining regulatory requirements will not be quick, a quick win could be to conduct a review of current practices.

OTHER

- ▶ Attract and retain top leadership talent to work in high-need schools by offering districts flexibility to pay school leaders more and by improving the incentives offered.
- ▶ Support state efforts to measure administrator preparation program effectiveness. In addition, encourage the state to hold programs accountable for outcomes.
- ▶ Establish new and support existing highly effective administrator professional development programs (for example, programs that emphasize ongoing, job-embedded, cohort-based, and/or school team-based professional development).
- ▶ Change the timing of school board elections to coincide with state or district elections.
- ▶ Revamp current school board training and offer high-quality professional development focused on how to govern instead of micromanage, on hiring, supporting and evaluating superintendents, and on budget.
- ▶ Invest in a state-funded mentor to support superintendents and school boards in districts with priority schools on effective board governance.



5

Support Students Beyond the Classroom

Why It's Important

A hungry, sick or emotionally unstable child simply cannot perform his/her best in the classroom, so we believe improving access to the basic nutritional and health resources is crucial to improving education. Beyond the basic needs, many students face language barriers, poverty, transportation issues, a lack of one-on-one support – any of which can have a direct impact on student achievement.

“There is a desperate need for improved access to mental health care for students and their families.”

– Arkansas Educator
(ForwARd Educator Survey)

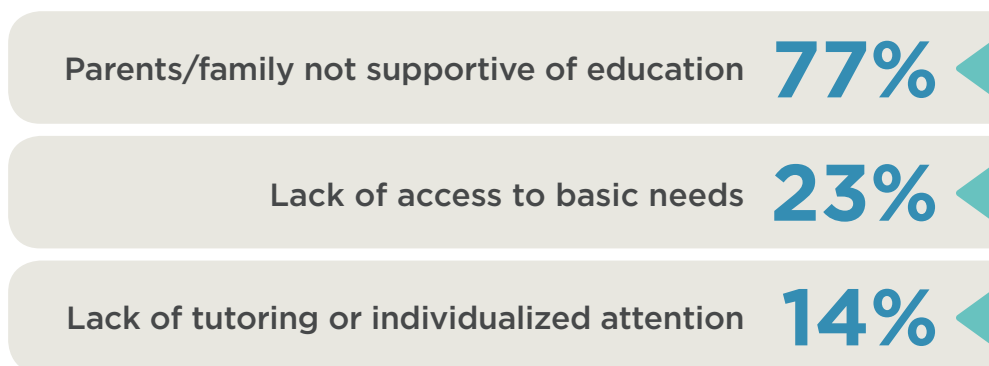


Support Beyond the Classroom in Arkansas Today

Parent and Family Engagement

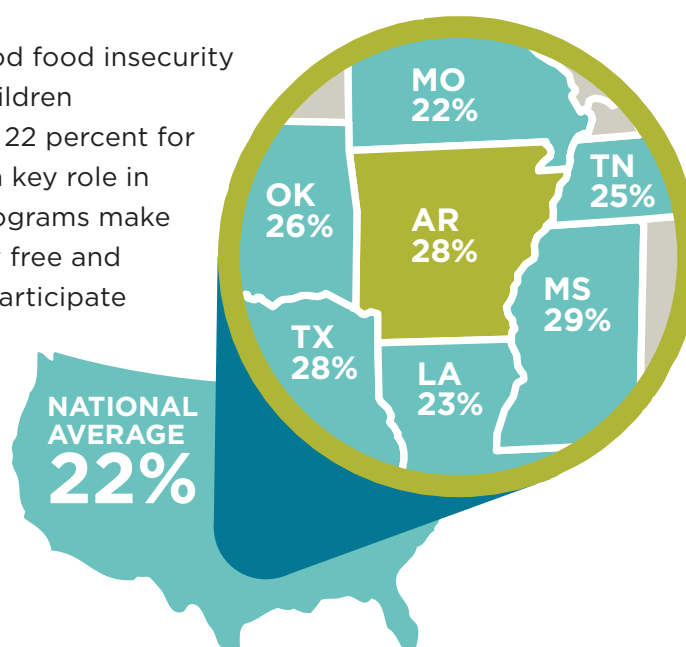
When there is a lack of supportive or engaged adults in a student's life, schools must have strong collaborative practices and a true culture of high expectations to support that student. Arkansas educators called out these needs in our educator surveys and focus groups, identifying lack of parent engagement and lack of basic needs as significant concerns. When asked to choose up to three obstacles (from a list of 10) to students achieving high levels of proficiency, educators selected:

Percent of Teacher Survey Respondents Selecting Obstacles to Student Success



Food Insecurity¹⁴

Arkansas has one of the highest childhood food insecurity rates in the nation, with 28 percent of children considered “food insecure” compared to 22 percent for the U.S. School nutrition programs play a key role in filling this gap. While school nutrition programs make both breakfast and lunch available, many free and reduced lunch-eligible students do not participate in breakfast. Why? Some want to avoid the social stigma associated with free meals; others can't get to school in time to eat before classes begin. Increasing breakfast participation would improve nutrition and school readiness among students at risk for food insecurity.

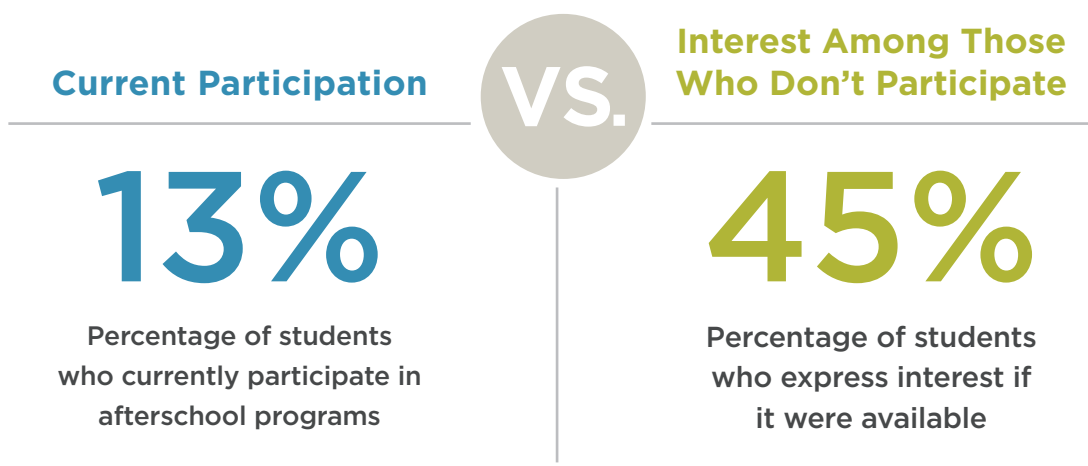


Access to Health and Dental Care¹⁵

Our state is also in the bottom quartile of states for access to preventative health and dental care, putting Arkansas students at risk from multiple angles. In fact, for students in Arkansas ages 2-17, four out of 10 children lack sufficient access to medical or dental care.

Participation in Afterschool and Summer Programs¹⁶

High-quality programs beyond the regular school hours can provide students with enrichment opportunities, positive reinforcement, one-on-one attention, mentoring and more. However, many Arkansas students are unable to participate in afterschool and summer programs due to lack of seats and barriers to transportation. A recent survey by the advocacy organization *America After 3PM* identified that only 13 percent of Arkansas students participate in afterschool or summer programs – but 45 percent of those who do not participate express interest if no barriers to participation existed.



Where We Want to Go

Aspiration

All students and families, starting with those in highest need, have access to and support in accessing the nutritional and health resources needed to come to school ready to learn.

Recommendations

FOUNDATIONAL

- ▶ Implement healthy breakfast as part of school day and provide all children nutritious snacks/dinner at afterschool and summer programs in high-need schools.
- ▶ Coordinate school-based resources information so high-risk children and families receive support, access to quality health care resources, and the effective communication they need.
- ▶ Expand high-quality afterschool and summer programs for all children P-12 by securing dedicated revenue stream including state support.

QUICK WINS

- ▶ Encourage all eligible schools and districts to sign up for Community Eligibility Program, which provides all students in a school free breakfast and lunch.
- ▶ Encourage regular, convenient, two-way parental and caregiver communication during and out of the school year. To achieve this, schools and districts must align their current outreach with best practices highlighted by leading advocacy organizations such as the National Parent Teacher Association and those practices observed in other districts (for example, providing English as a Second Language parents night classes on English, coaching parents to assist their children at home with class assignments).

OTHER

- ▶ Use telemedicine to cost-effectively deliver common health services to students.

6

Academically Distressed Schools

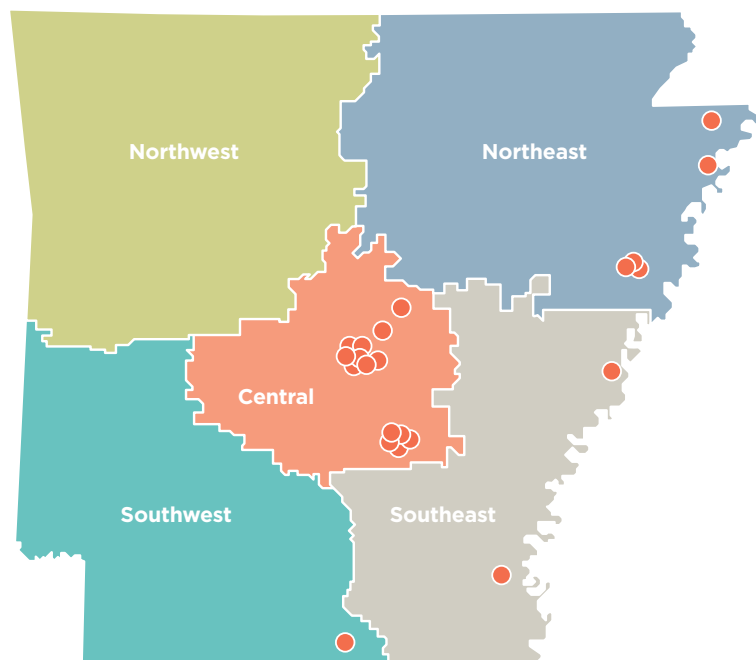
Why It's Important¹⁷

In 2013-14, approximately 14,000 students in Arkansas attended schools in academic distress. Unfortunately, most of these students represent already at-risk populations with minority students representing 88 percent, and Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) 83 percent of the total student body. Statewide, student populations are less than 40 percent minority and 60 percent FRL. For many of these families, simply changing schools is not an option. Why? Academically distressed schools in Arkansas tend to be clustered together, making transportation and proximity real barriers. Arkansas must work to empower academically distressed schools to turn around and better serve their students.

SCHOOLS IN ACADEMIC DISTRESS AS OF SPRING 2015

What is Academic Distress?

The term “academic distress” applies to a school where 49.5 percent or less of students score at or above proficiency on a composite of math and literacy tests over a three-year period, or is a “Needs Improvement” school that has not made progress against its Improvement Plan.



● = one distressed school

Academic Distress in Arkansas Today

While all recommendations can be applied to schools in academic distress, it's important to address areas that are unique to academically distressed schools. Right now, Arkansas does not have the resources in place to support and coordinate turnaround efforts at all academically distressed schools.

With all of the challenges faced by academically distressed schools, it's no wonder that educators in those schools report being much less satisfied with student achievement than peers in higher-performing schools (44 percent vs. 63 percent). However, a strong majority of educators do agree that the lowest-performing schools can be improved.

Positive Outlook

85%

Percentage of teachers in and out of academically distressed schools who believe the lowest-performing schools can be improved.



Where We Want to Go

Aspiration

All schools in academic distress and pre-academic distress receive support and interventions that enable them to transform their school cultures, dramatically improve student achievement and sustain their improvement over time.

Recommendations

Academic distress is a complicated situation for schools, districts, communities and more. There are no fast fixes or easy outs. Because academic distress involves several key components of the education system, we have grouped recommendations into the following categories: process, support, interventions, evaluation, community, and the Arkansas Department of Education.

PROCESS

Recommendations on how, when and why a school is deemed academically distressed.

SUPPORT

Recommendations on resources and assistance for schools in or approaching academic distress.

INTERVENTIONS

Recommendations on improving performance and progress to avoid or exit academic distress.

EVALUATION

Recommendations on a holistic, ongoing evaluation process to measure and share progress with the community.

COMMUNITY

Recommendations on how to inform and engage the community before, during and after academic distress.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Recommendations on how the state can assess, manage and monitor academic distress in Arkansas schools.

► PROCESS

Before Academic Distress (AD)

- The state should clearly explain how the “A-F report card” and Elementary and Secondary Education Act “focus” and “priority” schools relate to AD classifications in order to communicate more clearly with districts and communities.
- The state should create a Pre-Academic Distress (“Pre-AD”) zone to identify schools and districts that are on a path to academic distress.
- The Pre-AD zone should be composed of schools in the lowest-performing 5 percent not already in academic distress in order to concentrate focus and resources.
- Pre-AD schools that do not follow “binding recommendations” and do not demonstrate student achievement gains can be moved to AD classification.
- All Pre-AD and AD schools should participate in a comprehensive evaluation process.
 - Each comprehensive evaluation should provide Pre-AD and AD schools with specific recommendations of programs, interventions and strategies that improve student outcomes, particularly those necessary to increase performance in the areas causing the Pre-AD and AD designations
- The comprehensive evaluation process should result in “binding recommendations” (i.e., mandated actions) created with significant input from school leaders.
- The results of the comprehensive evaluation and “binding recommendations” should be shared with school and district leadership, the school board and the community.

Exiting Academic Distress

- The “academic distress” label should just be a classification and should end as soon as a school rises above the agreed-upon performance threshold signaling academic distress (for example, a school should not continue to be considered academically distressed after its performance has risen above the original threshold).
- Support and binding recommendations associated with academic distress should continue until a school demonstrates that it can sustain turnaround (i.e., support associated with academic distress should not necessarily end as soon as a school rises above the agreed-upon performance threshold).
- The decision to “exit” schools from state control should be made on a case-by-case basis, but should occur as soon as the school has met the agreed-upon performance threshold and demonstrated sustained progress implementing the recommendations in its comprehensive evaluation.

► SUPPORT

During Academic Distress

- In order to fund the specific supports recommended to schools in their comprehensive evaluation, the state should work with AD and Pre-AD schools to:
 - Supplement existing funds from a dedicated state funding pool for AD school support, when current sources (including districts, co-ops and the Arkansas Department of Education) are insufficient to fund recommendations
 - Reallocate existing funds from lower-impact programs where possible
 - Leverage all additional funds available to AD schools (for example, 1003g grants)
- Create a “turnaround academy” to train teachers and leaders (including those currently in AD schools) in specific skills needed to be successful in turnaround environments and provide financial and nonfinancial incentives to graduates who work in academically distressed schools.
 - The “turnaround academy” should be made accessible to participants living throughout the state
 - The “turnaround academy” should include a track for school-support personnel including those in the Arkansas Department of Education, districts and co-ops
 - The “turnaround academy” curriculum should be built from national best practices and include application of theory in the classroom, in addition to theory-based learning
- School boards of districts with schools in AD or Pre-AD must participate in special trainings on the academic distress process.

► INTERVENTIONS

During Academic Distress

- Decisions to remove leadership and/or assume state control should be case dependent and should be made if leadership (including principal, superintendent and/or board) demonstrates an inability to implement the plan and make improvements (as evidenced by changes in students’ actions).
 - The state should consider removal of leadership and/or assuming control if in-depth evaluation finds leadership does not have reasonable probability of implementing the plan and improving if given support
 - After initial evaluation, leadership should continue to lead turnaround process if they consistently demonstrate progress implementing their plan and improvement in the classroom throughout their time in academic distress

► EVALUATION

Holistic Metrics

- Progress in AD and Pre-AD schools should be measured using a balanced set of metrics, not just proficiency levels on test scores. Specifically, evaluation should include:
 - Progress implementing recommendations following timeline outlined in initial comprehensive evaluation (assessed through site visits)
 - Student achievement growth
 - Leading indicators of achievement (for example, attendance, tardiness, retention)
 - Educator and community input (for example, survey, focus groups, interviews)
 - Analysis of contextual factors which may be contributing to or inhibiting progress in implementing interventions identified in the comprehensive evaluation, including:
 - Academic supports available as compared to high-achieving schools with similar demographic populations (see example of academic supports at the end of this section)
 - Other important context including but not limited to demographic and enrollment trends and external risk factors (for example, safety, housing, healthy food options, public transportation and green spaces)
- The results of ongoing evaluation should be clearly communicated to families and the community.
- A new ADE team will be created to support the creation and implementation of the evaluation process (see ADE capacity). This team will be distinct from the team providing support to schools.



► COMMUNITY

• Family-community partnership with schools is an important part of turning around each AD or Pre-AD school. Partnership will ensure families and communities will have a say in the overall direction and sustainability of the turnaround. During the AD and Pre-AD process, communities need frequent, relevant communications and engagement to keep them well informed about the situation and improvement plan. Specifically:

- AD and Pre-AD schools should be required to have a community-chosen community advisory body which will take an active role advising the management of AD and Pre-AD schools
- Struggling schools' academic standing (Pre-AD and AD) should be clearly communicated to the community
- AD and Pre-AD schools' ongoing evaluation results (for example, quarterly reports) should be shared with the community in a public-friendly format
- Regular and effective parent and community engagement should be part of the accountability framework for AD and Pre-AD schools
- Community input should be part of AD and Pre-AD schools' evaluation process
- Community input should be part of AD and Pre-AD school leaders' evaluation process

• A new ADE team will be created to empower schools to build their own capacity to support their communities and hold schools accountable for effectively engaging with their communities in partnership with the evaluation teams (see the Arkansas Department of Education capacity recommendation).

► ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CAPACITY

Management of AD Process

- There should be a single unit, internal to the Arkansas Department of Education, responsible for managing the entire AD and Pre-AD process.
- The unit should be responsible for providing or coordinating the provision of the comprehensive evaluation, support, accountability, intervention and all other actions outlined in prior AD process, support and intervention recommendations.
- The single unit should be led by a direct report to the commissioner.

Size and Organization of ADE Unit

- School-support personnel should maintain a 3:1 ratio of AD and Pre-AD schools to support personnel.

- New teams with specialized capabilities (incremental to school-support personnel) should be created inside the Arkansas Department of Education unit.
 - Community engagement team (2-4 incremental full-time employees): made up of “community-engagement specialists” and designed to empower schools to build their own capacity to support their communities and to hold schools accountable for effectively engaging their communities
 - Ongoing evaluation team (1-2 incremental full-time employees): designed to create, pilot and implement the new AD evaluation process (see “Process: Before Academic Distress” proposed recommendation)

Skills and Capabilities

- School-support personnel should have experience leading in turnaround environments and demonstrate the ability to coach leaders in development of turnaround skills such as competencies for turnaround success, in addition to existing job description.

Recruiting and Retention

- Recruiting highly skilled, highly qualified personnel to internal Arkansas Department of Education unit must be a top priority for ADE.
 - ADE should be allowed hiring flexibility to staff team more efficiently (including waivers from mandated salary ranges, job posting duration requirements and hiring timeline)
- Salaries for school-support positions must be competitive with comparable positions in school districts.
- “Turnaround academy” should include a track for school-support personnel, including those in the Arkansas Department of Education, districts and co-ops.

Empowerment and Accountability

- Arkansas Department of Education unit should be held accountable for the success of schools in AD and Pre-AD.
- Evaluations of school-support personnel should be aligned with the way in which schools are evaluated (see “Process: Before Academic Distress” recommendations). The team evaluating schools should be separate from the school-support team.
- The Arkansas State Board of Education should continually evaluate the effectiveness of the internal Arkansas Department of Education unit and after five years should conduct a formal review to decide if it should continue, end or change this approach to school turnaround.
 - The results of the board’s evaluations and reviews should be presented to the Joint Legislative Committee on Education

Additional Information: Examples of Academic Supports That Could be Used as Part of Proposed Evaluation Recommendation

- The AD evaluation recommendation includes tracking the academic supports available to schools in AD and how the availability of those supports compares to those of high-achieving Arkansas schools with similar demographic populations.
- The final list of academic supports tracked should be determined during the creation of the comprehensive evaluation. Examples of the types of academic supports that could be measured as part of the evaluation include:
 - Highly qualified teachers including teachers certified by the National Board, certified to teach GT classes, certified to teach Advanced Placement or pre-AP courses (not excluding other measures of highly qualified teachers), or teachers with previous success in high-need schools
 - Instructional coaches/facilitators including math and literacy coaches, interventionists and other certified staff who are not assigned a class-load of students who have clear goals, expectations and accountability
 - Building administrators including assistant principals and principals
 - Rigorous classes including GT classes (including seminar classes) for secondary schools, pre-AP classes for secondary schools and AP classes for secondary schools, EAST lab classes for elementary and secondary schools
 - Average class sizes
 - Technology resources including number of computers (desktop, laptop and iPads) assigned to the school, number of SMART boards, number of computer labs, number of computer lab attendants and teachers employed to run the computer labs
 - School partners and volunteers including the number of community organizations, local businesses engaged in formal partnerships with each school, the number of volunteer hours logged at each school
 - Grants, awards and other supplemental funding including the name of each grant and the amount of the grant (all federal, state and local grants and gifts including PTA funding given to schools for activities and programs)
 - Out-of-school learning opportunities including number of student field trips, trips for school clubs/organizations/teams, workshops/classes for students held in the evenings and on weekends
 - Facilities including the number of gymnasiums, auditoriums, science labs, outdoor classrooms, portable classrooms, nurse offices, counselor offices, square footage of facility



Why It's Important

If Arkansas is to bring about significant improvements in public education, we must be ready to initiate and support those improvements with legislation, funding and a commitment to using every dollar wisely. Simply put, we have a responsibility to not only provide sufficient resources for Arkansas education, but also to ensure that those resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Systems and Policies in Arkansas Today

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE)

The ADE is the administrative arm of the State Board of Education. In addition to implementing education law, the ADE provides leadership, resources and support to school districts, schools and educators. Echoing concerns from teachers and leaders, we heard from ADE leadership that the burden of regulations and paperwork hinders its ability to support student achievement.

Education Service Cooperatives¹⁸

Co-ops were established by the Arkansas State Board of Education in 1985 to help districts meet standards, equalize education opportunities, use resources more effectively and promote coordination between school districts and the Arkansas Department of Education. The services provided by co-ops include support for professional development, curriculum, technology, purchasing and more.

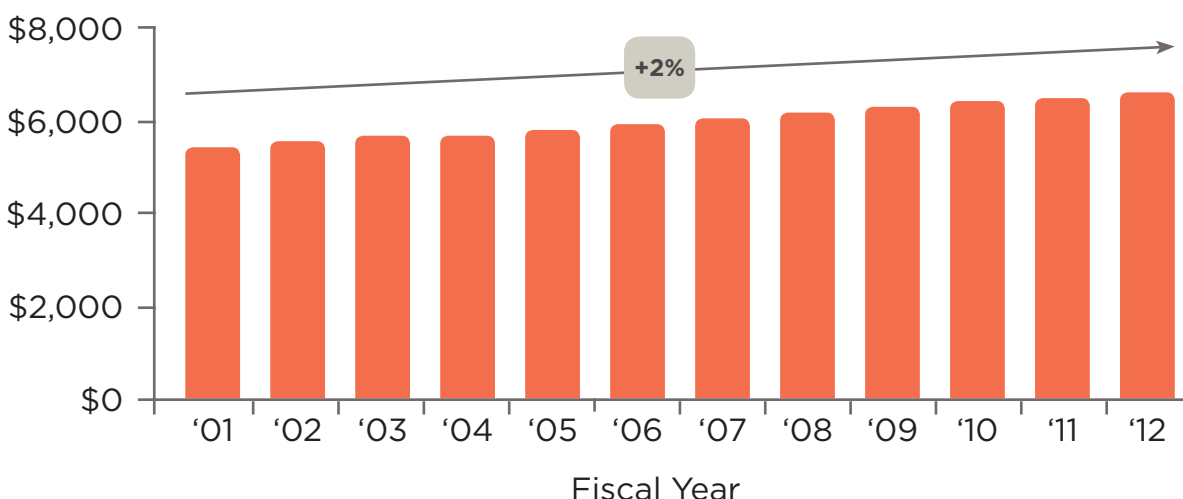
In our outreach efforts we heard that co-ops do important work today, but there is also an opportunity to reinforce that good work with additional support and attention from the ADE.

Funding and Spending¹⁹

In Arkansas today, school districts are funded by a combination of federal funds, state funds and local funds raised by property taxes. More than half of Arkansas's total education funding is funding from the state and a uniform tax rate levied locally. That funding, called foundation funding, has generally increased about 2 percent annually over the last 10 years to account for changes in cost of living.

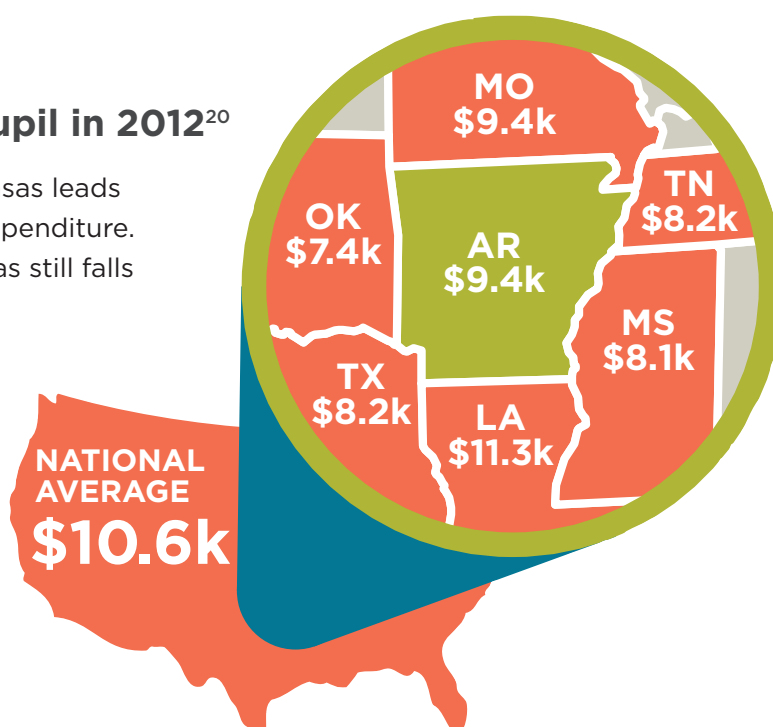
INCREASE IN FOUNDATION FUNDING

Per Pupil Foundation Funding



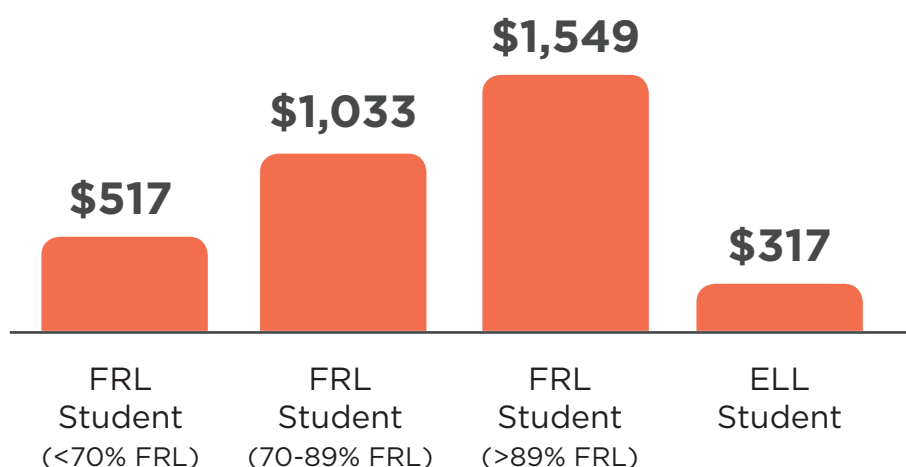
FOUNDATION FUNDING: Current Expenditure Per Pupil in 2012²⁰

With the exception of one state, Arkansas leads the region in per-student education expenditure. However, education funding in Arkansas still falls below the national average.



Levels of funding differ across the state to account for the fact that some students have different education and support needs. For example, each school district today receives about \$300 per year per student identified as an English Language Learner (ELL). Throughout our outreach, we heard that additional funding is needed to support the success of ELL students. Additionally, each school district receives additional funds to support students from low-income families. The amount of incremental funds awarded depends on the percent of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. In today's model, the level of support at the percentage cut points varies drastically. A school district with 69 percent of the student population qualifying for Free & Reduced Lunch (FRL) receives only about half of what a district with 70 percent of its student population qualifying for FRL receives.

Additional Pre-Pupil Funding for Free & Reduced Lunch and English Language Learner Students



Aspiration

All school districts have adequate funding and use resources in a way that most effectively supports student success. Policies enable the implementation of recommendations needed for Arkansas to become a leading state in education.

Recommendations

► Arkansas Department of Education and Education Service Cooperatives (Co-ops)

- Streamline the regulatory burden for educators at all levels (including the Arkansas Department of Education) to reduce complexity, encourage a shift from a compliance mindset to a performance-driven mindset, and enable educators to focus on their most important roles. Gather input from educators to inform specific changes. Focus regulations and related support on highest-risk situations where compliance activities could be most helpful (for example, struggling schools).
- Current staffing and budget rules governing the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) constrain ADE from hiring the best personnel for the job (for example, each ADE division is required to have a specified number of personnel from each salary schedule). Revise staffing and budget rules to offer more hiring autonomy to ADE leadership.
- Increase compensation in the Arkansas Department of Education staff salary schedule to be at least as competitive as districts in order to attract strong educator talent to ADE.
- The state should consider structural changes (for example, governance, funding, support) for underperforming co-ops to ensure all districts have access to a consistent set of high-quality services.
- The ADE should hold each co-op accountable for providing high-quality services that support student achievement and effective use of resources at the school and district levels.
- This effort should build and improve upon ADE's existing evaluation of co-ops as required by legislation in 2012. Refinements to consider include introducing greater rigor, requiring an independent evaluator, making formal evaluations more frequent, and introducing yearly reporting on progress.

► Recommendations to Improve Spending Effectiveness

- Districts, co-ops, ADE and other education stakeholders should make decisions based on educational value (for example, how much student impact is achieved with funds). Support districts and other entities in building this capability.
- Develop statewide district efficiency metrics to support spending transparency. For districts that are underperforming (for example, classified as Pre-Academically Distressed or Academically Distressed), efficiency targets should be set and intensive support should be provided to improve how funds are spent.
 - Metrics should be carefully developed with input from districts to mitigate unintended consequences (for example, sending misleading messages, adding bureaucratic requirements, encouraging changes not in the best interest of student achievement)
 - Consider implementing as part of current performance measurements and action plans so this does not add a new burden for districts
 - While any metrics should be the product of a fresh review, they might build on existing law established in Act 35 of the 2nd Extraordinary Session of 2003
- Drive greater efficiency of district spending without compromising outcomes. Form regional and/or statewide “communities of practice” around resource use in specific, high-value/high-inefficiency areas (for example, school staffing/class size, use of instructional coaches, purchasing, special education). Create or leverage an existing statewide public-private partnership to oversee these “communities of practice.”
 - Enable best-practice sharing and collective problem solving, and drive long-term improvement
 - Identify metrics to measure improvement and success
 - Build political will by convening key stakeholders from multiple sectors and across the state (e.g., districts, co-ops, industry leaders)
 - In areas where clear best practices are established, the state may then codify the practices into law or regulation (e.g., statewide purchasing practices)

► Funding for Excellence

- Arkansas's schools are not sufficiently resourced to perform at the aspired level of educational excellence. Invest in additional funding to support educational excellence. This funding should prioritize ForwARd's recommendations and be increased in increments, and additional funding should be tied to evidence of effective use of existing resources.
- Currently, National School Lunch (NLS) funding is provided to districts based on tiers of percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), so that a district with 69 percent FRL students gets roughly half the funds of a 70 percent FRL district. Smooth out the step-wise function used for the National School Lunch program to reduce funding differences between similar percent FRL districts.
- Current English Language Learner funding is insufficient compared to the need – invest in greater categorical funding for ELL students. Funding should be used in ways that best provide additional support to ELL students (e.g., additional high-quality academic support).
- Tie a portion of English Language Learner and National School Lunch program funding to evidence of district effectiveness in supporting ELL and NSL students.
- Current pre-K funding is insufficient compared to the need – invest in greater funding for pre-K. Improving quality will require approximately \$70 million to \$100 million per year, then subsequently increasing access will require an incremental approximately \$20 million to \$80 million per year.

► Other Recommendations

- As a general principle, education laws should be kept as simple as possible. In that spirit, ForwARd recommends implementing legislative changes only when department policy changes are insufficient to drive the change needed.
- Evaluate a school's effectiveness based on both absolute performance and student growth (i.e. student achievement growth from the beginning to the end of the school year).
- Continue to build alignment across Arkansas's school performance designations to enhance clarity. Furthermore, improve communication of the designations to educators and communities.

Potential Impact

Just as it will take many people working together to implement these recommendations, doing so will impact many people throughout the state. Students, educators, entire communities – all will feel the impact. How? Read through the graphic below to see just some of the ways achieving our goals will benefit Arkansas education.

Educators

- Teachers are excited about how collaboration can help them become better teachers
- Teachers feel respected and that rules, training and processes support them in helping kids
- New teachers have a smooth transition into the profession with lots of hands-on training and mentors

School and district leaders

- Principals and superintendents are inspired by visits to high-performing schools and districts to set lofty visions for their own schools and districts
- Administrators feel respected and are supported by rules, training and processes to make decisions and lead the teams toward their vision

Schools in academic distress

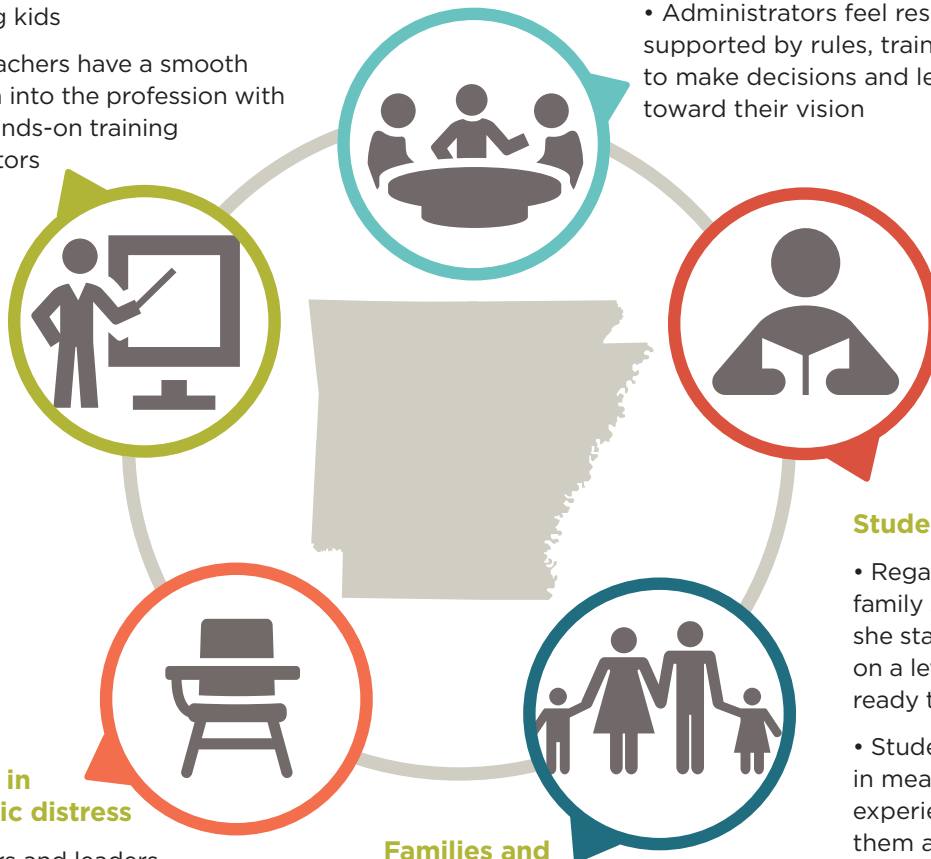
- Teachers and leaders in schools in academic distress feel supported by the administration and community to overcome their challenges
- Students and the community of a school in Academic Distress feel like they have input in determining where support is needed

Families and communities

- Families and communities feel like they know what's happening at their local school and know how to be involved
- Families and communities are assured that even in tough economic times, their kids will be able to get nutritious meals and health care through school

Students

- Regardless of a student's family situation, he or she starts kindergarten on a level playing field, ready to learn
- Students are engaged in meaningful learning experiences that excite them and help them understand a wide variety of college and career options throughout their education
- Students in every classroom, regardless of location or subject, are taught by a talented, well-prepared teacher



Moving ForwARd: Next Steps

These recommendations set a lofty ambition for the state of Arkansas: that every student graduates prepared for college and the workplace. We believe that implementing the recommendations will get us there – but not overnight. Achieving this end will require hard work, true collaboration from around the state and a commitment to continuous improvement over the course of several years. We have a strong, diverse coalition – the ForwARd steering committee – that believes in this work. Will you join us?

Our first step will be to share these recommendations with the whole state. We've also identified some early priorities: supporting the Arkansas Department of Education in implementing the recommendations for Academic Distress, improving the quantity and quality of time that teachers spend collaborating, and creating more opportunities for our students to participate in summer programs.

We'll also be creating a new organization to help support and implement the recommendations, which will keep us on track for making progress at the rate we aspire to pursue.

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED?

- 1** Visit ForwardArkansas.org to learn more about the state of education in Arkansas.
- 2** Share the recommendations with your friends, families, teachers and community leaders. We make it easy through our social portals on Facebook and Twitter.
- 3** Encourage conversations in your community and email us at info@forwardarkansas.org to tell us about your progress.
- 4** Sign up for our e-newsletter (on the home page of the website) to stay informed about ForwARd Arkansas's progress and how you can help.

Glossary

Arkansas Better Chance (ABC): The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program was created in 1991 to offer high-quality early education services to children ages 0 to 5 exhibiting developmental and socioeconomic risk factors. In 2003, the Arkansas General Assembly made a commitment to expand early childhood education funding by \$100 million to serve low-income 3- and 4-year-old children with high-quality prekindergarten services. This expansion, known as Arkansas Better Chance for School Success, has become the state prekindergarten program. ABC is only available to students with family income that is 200 percent or less of the federal poverty line. It operates as a grant program, and participating providers must renew ABC grants annually.

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dccece/Pages/aboutDCCECE.aspx>; ABC Shrinks Gaps (Arkansas Research Center)

Academic Distress: This term is used to describe a school or district that has, for a sustained period of time, demonstrated a lack of student achievement. Specifically, this is a classification assigned to (a) any public school or school district in which 49.5 percent or less of its students achieve proficient or advanced on a composite of math and literacy tests for the most recent three-year period; or (b) a Needs Improvement school (Priority) or a school district with a Needs Improvement (Priority) school that has not made the progress required under the school's Priority Improvement Plan (PIP). A Needs Improvement school is a school that has not met its annual targets in performance growth and high school graduation rates. See the Arkansas Accountability Addendum to Elementary Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request for more information.

http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/ESEA/ESEA_Flexibility_Accountability_Addendum.pdf, ADE Rules Governing ACTAAP and the Academic Distress Program, Sept 2014: http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/rules/Current/ACTAAP-FINAL_-_September_2014.pdf

ACT: The ACT is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in English, mathematics, reading and science.

<http://www.actstudent.org/faq/what.html>

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE): The administrative organization that carries out the state's education laws and policies of the state board.

Advanced Placement Exams (AP): AP exams are rigorous, multiple-component tests that are administered at high schools each May. High school students can earn college credit, placement or both for qualifying AP Exam scores. Each AP Exam has a corresponding AP course and provides a standardized measure of what students have learned in the AP classroom.

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/ap>

Common Core State Standards: The Common Core state standards is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career and life, regardless of where they live.

<http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/assessment/definitions-of-common-terms>

Quality Counts: Quality Counts is *Education Week's* annual report on state-level efforts to improve public education. It is published in January.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/index.html>

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL): The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. A student is eligible for free lunch at school if his or her family income is below 130 percent of the poverty line; the student is eligible for a reduced-price lunch if the family income is below 185 percent of the poverty line.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslnp/national-school-lunch-program-nslnp>

Glossary

National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP): NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subject areas. Assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history and, beginning in 2014, technology and engineering literacy.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/>

Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI):

Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI) is an observational tool for use in the primary grades to identify student development in six areas related to school learning. The inventory observes behaviors developed in school so observations can be used to inform instruction and improve achievement.

Footnotes

1. **Source:** NAEP database; ACT Condition of College and Career Readiness Report, 2007–2013; The Chronicle for Higher Education data on college completion – data from 2004–2013

2. **Source:** Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth Grade Follow Up; The Abecedarian Project; The HighScope Perry Preschool Study; Chicago Child Parent Centers Program

3. **Source:** Office for Education Policy, *National and AR Research on Pre-K* (10/2014).

4. **Source:** QELI data gathered by the Arkansas Research Center, reported by Arkansas Department of Education. Data for 2013 only.

5. **Source:** ADE QELI performance and ABC enrollment data by county for 2012. 2011 4-year-old ABC enrollment assumed to equal 2012 kindergarten entry from ABC. American Community Survey, 2013 five-year estimate for age. Four-year-old Arkansas population by county estimated as 20 percent of 0-4 age group. ADE public school FRL demographics. Arkansas Head Start Association reported actual enrollment.

6. **Source:** NCES Public HS Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School years 2010-11 and 2011-12; College going rate from NCHEMS Information Center, which relies on information from Tom Mortenson-Postsecondary Education Opportunity <http://www.postsecondary.org>; College completion rates calculated from: http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/no.state=AR§or=public_four; data is based on IPEDS, which tracks completions of first time, full-time degree seeking undergrad students; Arkansas workforce funding white paper “Arkansas Workforce

Funding Model and the Middle-Skill Jobs Gap”.

7. **Source:** Workforce Strategy Center and the Gates Foundation report: “Employers, low-income young adults, and post secondary credentials: a practical typology for business, education, and community leaders” (2009); ADTEC reports; ADTEC interview

8. **Source:** Eric A. Hanushek, John F. Kain, and Steven G. Rivkin, “Teachers, Schools, and Student Achievement,” NBER Working Paper No. 6691, August 1998, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w6691>.

9. **Source:** Eric A. Hanushek, “Valuing Teachers,” Education Next, Summer 2011, <http://educationnext.org/valuing-teachers/>.

10. **Source:** Arkansas Department of Education, Teacher Salary Schedule Analysis 2014-2015, ForwARd analysis

11. **Source:** ADE website, ADE interview

12. **Source:** Arkansas LEADS rubric, Arkansas Leadership Academy Master Principal Program rubric, The Wallace Foundation report “The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning” (2012), The Center for Public Education (NSBA initiative) “Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards” (2011), The George W. Bush Institute and New Leaders “Great Principals at Scale: Creating District Conditions that Enable All Principals to be Effective” (2014), Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota “How Leadership Influences Student Learning” (2004) and “Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning: Final Report of Research Findings” (2010), STAND for Children Leadership Center “Strengthening School Leadership” (2012)

Footnotes

13. **Sources:** Arkansas LEADS rubric, Arkansas Leadership Academy Master Principal Program rubric, The Wallace Foundation report “The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning” (2012), The Center for Public Education (NSBA initiative) “Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards” (2011), The George W. Bush Institute and New Leaders “Great Principals at Scale: Creating District Conditions that Enable All Principals to be Effective” (2014), Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota “How Leadership Influences Student Learning” (2004) and “Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning: Final Report of Research Findings” (2010), STAND for Children Leadership Center “Strengthening School Leadership” (2012)

14. **Source:** Map the Meal Gap (2014), Feeding America, pg. 32-33.

15. **Source:** Kaiser Family Foundation based on national ACS health survey (2012/2013).

16. **Source:** Parent survey conducted by AR after 3 PM, advocacy organization in state for expanded range of support services.

17. **Source:** ADE. Regions and school enrollment identified based on school code in 2013-14 demographic data from Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas.

18. **Source:** Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives 2-page flyer, co-op director and ADE interviews.

18. **Source:** Arkansas Bureau Legislative Research report “A report on Legislative Hearings for the 2014 Interim Study on Educational Adequacy” (Oct 2014), Picus Odden & Associates report “Desk Audit of the Arkansas School Funding Matrix” (Sept. 2014).

19. **Source:** Census of Governments: Finance – Survey of School System Finances <http://www.census.gov/govs/school/>. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

ForwARd is advised by The Boston Consulting Group (research and strategic planning), Eric Rob & Isaac (web and report development), and The Peacock Group (communications).



WORKING TOGETHER TO ADVANCE EDUCATION

forwardarkansas.org

THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

2015 FULL REPORT



WORKING TOGETHER TO
ADVANCE EDUCATION

ForwARd



Dear Arkansan:

ForwARd Arkansas, a strategic partnership of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Walton Family Foundation and Arkansas Board of Education, has been established to develop a strategic plan to dramatically improve public education in Arkansas.

ForwARd has brought us together, a diverse group of Arkansas leaders with a wide range of experiences, to form its steering committee. We are reaching out to educators, parents, students, community leaders and policy makers across our state for input on how to advance education and move Arkansas forward. Following careful review of input from the community and based upon our understanding of where we stand today (which we share with you in this report), we plan to complete and release a holistic plan for P-16 education.

We start this process from a position of strength. Arkansas has been successful in improving access to education across all ages from pre-K to college. We have also established policies and standards that should support improved student outcomes. However, student outcomes are still far below our aspirations. Too few students are graduating from our schools prepared for college and the workforce. Additionally, the achievement gap is still significant despite recent gains.

ForwARd's work will not stop with the release of a plan. ForwARd is committed to working with the rest of Arkansas to change these outcomes in the coming years. And the opportunity is great. Just to give one example: if we are able to bring Arkansas's 6-year college graduation rates up from 39% (among the lowest in the nation) just to the national average of 57%, 11,000 more Arkansas students would graduate from college in the next five years in 4-year public universities alone.¹

Education is important to all of us. Let's move ForwARd together.

Sincerely,

ForwARd Arkansas Steering Committee
Working Together to Advance Education

Steering Committee

Shane Broadway, Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education
Toby Daugherty, Lead Recruiter and Outreach Coordinator, The STAND Foundation
Kim Davis, Board Member, Arkansas State Board of Education
Bill Dillard III, Vice President, Dillard's Inc.
Marcy Doderer, President and CEO, Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock
Matt Dozier, President and CEO, Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST) Initiative
Bob East, Co-Founder, East-Harding Inc.
Joyce Elliot, Arkansas State Senator
Melanie Fox, Co-Founder, J&M Foods
Diana Gonzales Worthen, Director, Project RISE at University of Arkansas at Fayetteville
Lavina Grandon, Founder and President, Rural Community Alliance
Johnny Key, Associate Vice President of University Relations, University of Arkansas
Tom Kimbrell, Superintendent, Bryant Public Schools
Ginny Kurrus, Former State President, Arkansas PTA
Michele Linch, Executive Director, Arkansas State Teachers Association
Hugh McDonald, President and CEO, Entergy Arkansas Inc.
Justin Minkel, Elementary School Teacher, Jones Elementary School in Springdale
David Rainey, Assistant State Director, JBHM Education Group
John Riggs IV, President, J.A. Riggs Tractor Company
Scott Shirey, Founder and Executive Director, KIPP Delta Public Schools
Ray Simon, Former Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
Kathy Smith, Senior Program Officer, Walton Family Foundation
LaDonna Spain, School Improvement Specialist, Arkansas Department of Education
Bob Watson, Former Superintendent, El Dorado Public Schools
Sherece West-Scantlebury, President and CEO, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
Darrin Williams, CEO, Southern Bancorp Inc.
Kenya Williams, Co-Chair, Strong-Community Leadership Alliance

For more information on the Steering Committee, please visit ForwardArkansas.org.

About ForwARd

ForwARd Arkansas is a partnership of education, business, government and civil society professionals committed to improving public education in the state. The group is currently conducting extensive research, encouraging statewide discussion and developing a holistic plan to strengthen public education.

ForwARd is organized by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Walton Family Foundation and Arkansas Board of Education, and advised by The Boston Consulting Group (research and strategic planning), Eric Rob & Isaac (web and report development), and The Peacock Group (communications).

VISION: Every Arkansas student will graduate prepared for success in college and the workplace

MISSION: To help Arkansas create one of the finest public education systems in the nation

GOAL: To create a holistic strategic plan for P-16 education in Arkansas, with specific recommendations for academically distressed schools and school districts, that will provide actionable recommendations to shape and guide the state's time and resources to realize this vision and mission

Table of Contents

Arkansas Education at a Glance 4

Understanding Regional Differences 5

Report Summary: 4 Major Findings 6

Achieving Student Access to Education..... 7

 Improved Opportunity for Pre-K Students..... 8

 Improvement in College Access 9

Strong Policies & Standards10

 Policies & Standards Power Student Outcomes 11

 Educators Meeting Quality Counts Standards.....12

 Expanding Digital Learning13

 Innovative Learning Models.....14

 Investing in Education15

Student Outcomes are Below Aspirations.....16

 Access vs. Achievement.....17

 Elementary Schools Moving the Needle.....18

 Academic Performance Varies by School.....19

 Increased Enrollment in College Remedial Courses..... 20

 Low College Graduation Rates 20

Significant Achievement Gaps21

 Population Changes in Arkansas 22

 Overcoming Poverty..... 23

 Minority Achievement Gaps 24

 Narrowing the Gaps: 4th & 8th Grades..... 25

 Regional Achievement Gaps..... 26

Conclusion 27

Call to Action..... 27

Partnering Organizations 28

Glossary 29

Appendix31

Footnotes 32

Arkansas Education at a Glance

A Changing Landscape

A lot has changed in the last several years. Arkansas has more students in fewer schools, with increases in percentage of minority students and percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (FRL). State spending per student enrolled has dropped 8%

for pre-K and increased 3% for K-12, with Arkansas ranked 33rd in the nation for per-pupil expenditure. There has also been a 24% increase in the number of students attending 2- or 4-year institutions.

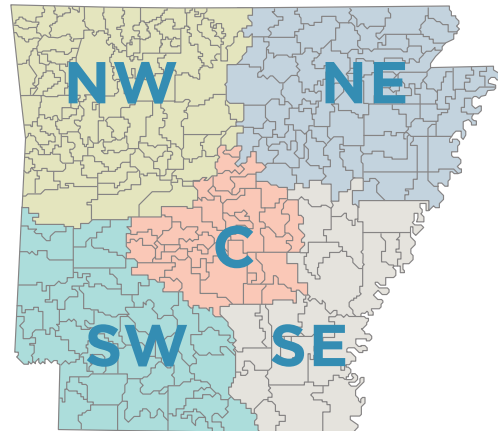
Key Changes Since 2005-06²

	2005-06	2012-13	Change from '05-'13
Pre-K³			
3- & 4-year-olds enrolled	37,000	39,000	+2,000 students (+5%)
\$ per pupil	\$6,014	\$5,514	-\$500 (-8% pts)
	2005-06	2013-14	Change from '05-'14
K-12			
Number of school districts	261	258	-3 districts
Avg students/district	1,766	1,841	+75 stud./district (+4%)
Number of schools	1,111	1,082	-29 schools (-3%)
Number of teachers ⁴	33,000	33,000	—
Number of students	464,000	475,000	+11,000 (+2%)
% of students minority	31%	37%	+6% pts
% of students qualifying for FRL ⁵	54%	61%	+7% pts
\$ per pupil ⁶	\$9,173	\$9,411	+\$238 (+3%)
	2005-06	2013-14	Change from '05-'14
Higher Ed			
Number of students in 2- or 4-year	146,000	181,000	+35,000 (24%)
% of students in 4-year schools ⁷	61%	65%	+4% pts
% of students minority ⁸	26%	32%	+6% pts

Understanding Regional Differences

Racial and economic composition in the Arkansas student population varies widely from region to region, with significant numbers of children from low-income families present in all areas of the state.

For the purpose of this report, regions are defined according to the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing and the Assessment and Accountability Program.



Student Demographics by Region⁹

	NW	NE	Central	SW	SE	Arkansas
White	70%	71%	56%	56%	46%	63%
Black	3%	22%	33%	30%	46%	21%
Hispanic	19%	5%	7%	11%	6%	11%
Other Races	8%	2%	4%	3%	1%	5%
Total Students (k)	162.5	93.7	146.0	48.5	24.2	474.9
FRL-Eligible	58%	67%	56%	68%	74%	61%
% Age 0-17 in Poverty (2012)	26%	31%	25%	34%	39%	28%
ELL (2014-15)	16%	2%	5%	6%	3%	8%
504 (2014-15)	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%

Note: May not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Report Summary: 4 Major Findings¹⁰

1 Access

Arkansas has been successful in improving access to education and in increasing participation in higher-level educational activities.

- ▶ **Pre-K Access:** Top 20 nationally
- ▶ **High School Graduation Rate:** Above national average
- ▶ **AP Exams & ACT:** Very large increase in participating students
- ▶ **College-Going Rate:** Top 20 nationally

2 Standards

Arkansas has established policies and standards that should support improved student outcomes.

- ▶ **Common Core:** Arkansas is now 4 years into the implementation of this rigorous college-ready standards program
- ▶ **Principal & Teacher Licensure & Training:** Arkansas has been recognized as a leader in developing standards in these areas
- ▶ **Per-Pupil Expenditure:** Arkansas's per-pupil expenditure has increased in recent years and is near national average

3 Outcomes

Student outcomes are still far below aspirations across the state; opportunity exists to improve.

- ▶ **Pre-K:** For low-income children who attended pre-K, only 18% were considered 'developed' in all six QELI categories: 31% in at least 5 categories, 43% in at least 4 categories and 57% in 3 or less categories
- ▶ **4th- and 8th-Grade:** Bottom 20 nationally in math and literacy test scores – and that rank has dropped since 2005
- ▶ **College Graduation Rate:** 39% (48th in the nation)

4 Achievement Gap

Despite recent gains, the achievement gap is still significant, and this is reflected in economic, racial and regional disparities.

- ▶ **Low-Income & Minority Students:** Perform below other students on national tests, although the gap has narrowed since 2005
- ▶ **Regional Achievement:** Southeast has lowest average but largest gains; Central has largest disparity and concentration of academically distressed schools
- ▶ **Pockets of Performance:** Across Arkansas, there are pockets of high and low performance suggesting opportunity to spread what already works well statewide

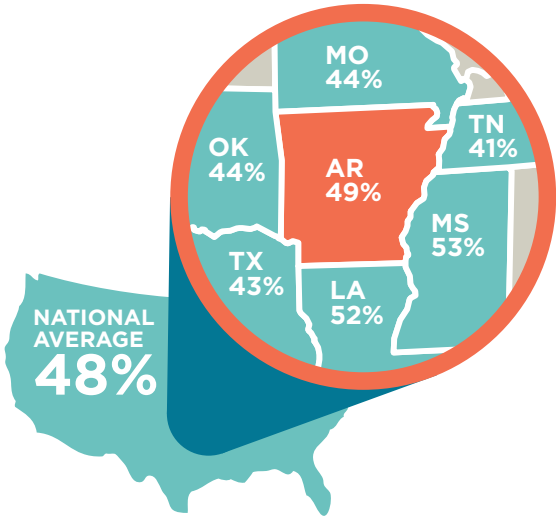
ACHIEVING STUDENT ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Arkansas has been successful in improving access to education and in increasing participation in higher-level educational activities. More students are attending pre-K, and high school graduation and college-going rates are higher than the national average. College enrollment is up.

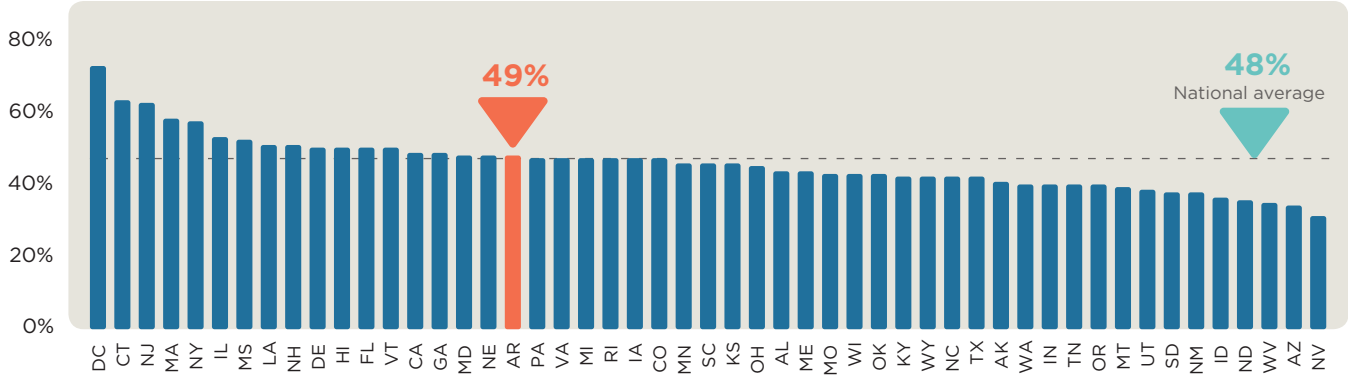
Improved Opportunity for Pre-K Students

49% of Arkansas 3- and 4-year-olds attend pre-K which is in line with the national average of 48%. While we rank 18th in the nation, we have only increased pre-K attendance by 0.6% since 2005-06 compared to a national average increase of 3%.¹¹

To help improve these numbers, Arkansas recently received a \$60 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This grant will be used to improve services for roughly 1,700 students and increase pre-K capacity by nearly 2,200 students.¹²



3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool in 2012-13



Source: Ed Week Quality Counts database accessed 10/21/2014. ■ Arkansas ■ Other states

Pre-K Access in Arkansas¹³

Study after study shows the benefit of pre-K education for 3- and 4-year-olds. Pre-K provides our children the learning foundation they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

“The research is strong,” Rich Huddleston, executive director for Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, said in a July 11, 2013, *Arkansas Times* article reporting on pre-K access in the state. “For low-income and at-risk kids, if you don’t get to them early and if they start school behind, it’s less likely that they’re going to catch up to their peers.”

In Arkansas, we continue to make strides in pre-K access, leading the nation as one of the Top 20 states in this area. Although we rank higher than other states, we still have room to grow. Between the federal Head Start and Early Head Start and the state program, Arkansas Better Chance, we serve 47% of eligible 3-year-olds and 80% of eligible 4-year-olds. That leaves approximately 15,000 eligible low-income 3- and 4-year-old children without pre-K slots.

The need for pre-K access is great and helps families like Charlotte Franklin’s son, Christopher, who was featured in the *Arkansas Times* article. Christopher attended a Head Start program in Little

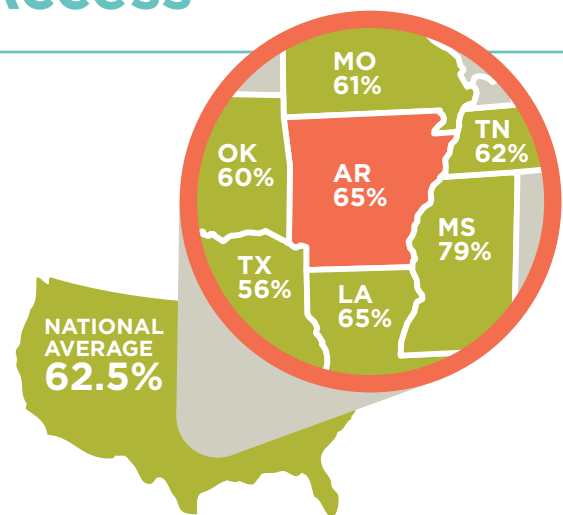
Rock when he was 3 years old after his mom saw a sign about it and decided to check it out. Now, Christopher is in 4th grade at eStem, a charter school in downtown Little Rock.

His mom said Christopher’s pre-K foundation made all the difference in his school readiness, social skills and academic performance. For Christopher, pre-K instilled in him a love for learning.

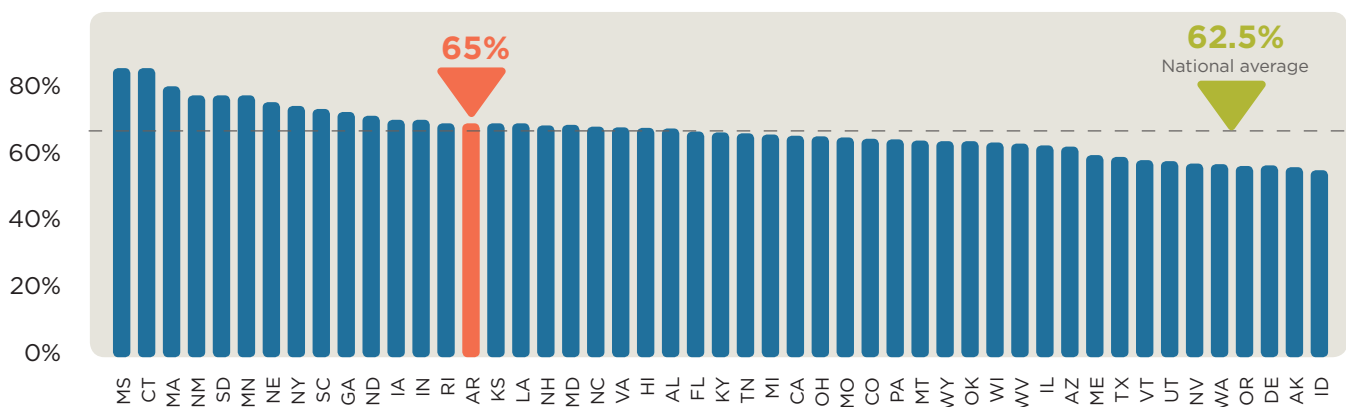
“At Head Start, we learned math, writing and literacy,” Christopher told the reporter. “It helped me a lot when I went to kindergarten. I like school. I want to go to college.”

Improvement in College Access

84% of Arkansas high school students graduate, and 65% of those who graduate attend college. This is a 9% increase in students attending college from 2004, indicating that college access has improved. The national average for college attendance has only increased by 6.8% since 2004.¹⁴



Percentage of High School Graduates Going on to College in 2010



Source: NCHEMS Information Center

More Students Participate in AP Exams and the ACT

Participation in AP exams and the ACT helps pave the way for access and success in college. 59% of Arkansas junior and senior students took AP exams in 2012, ranking us 6th in the nation for participation. 88% of Arkansas students took the ACT in 2012, which is a 14% increase from 2008, with the average score staying consistent.¹⁵

Success of the AAIMS Program¹⁶

Some of these gains can be attributed to the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science, Inc., an affiliate of the National Math and Science Initiative. AAIMS works to build enrollment and increase the number of students taking – and earning qualifying scores on – AP exams in mathematics, science and English (MSE). The program launched in 2008 and includes a special focus on traditionally underserved students.

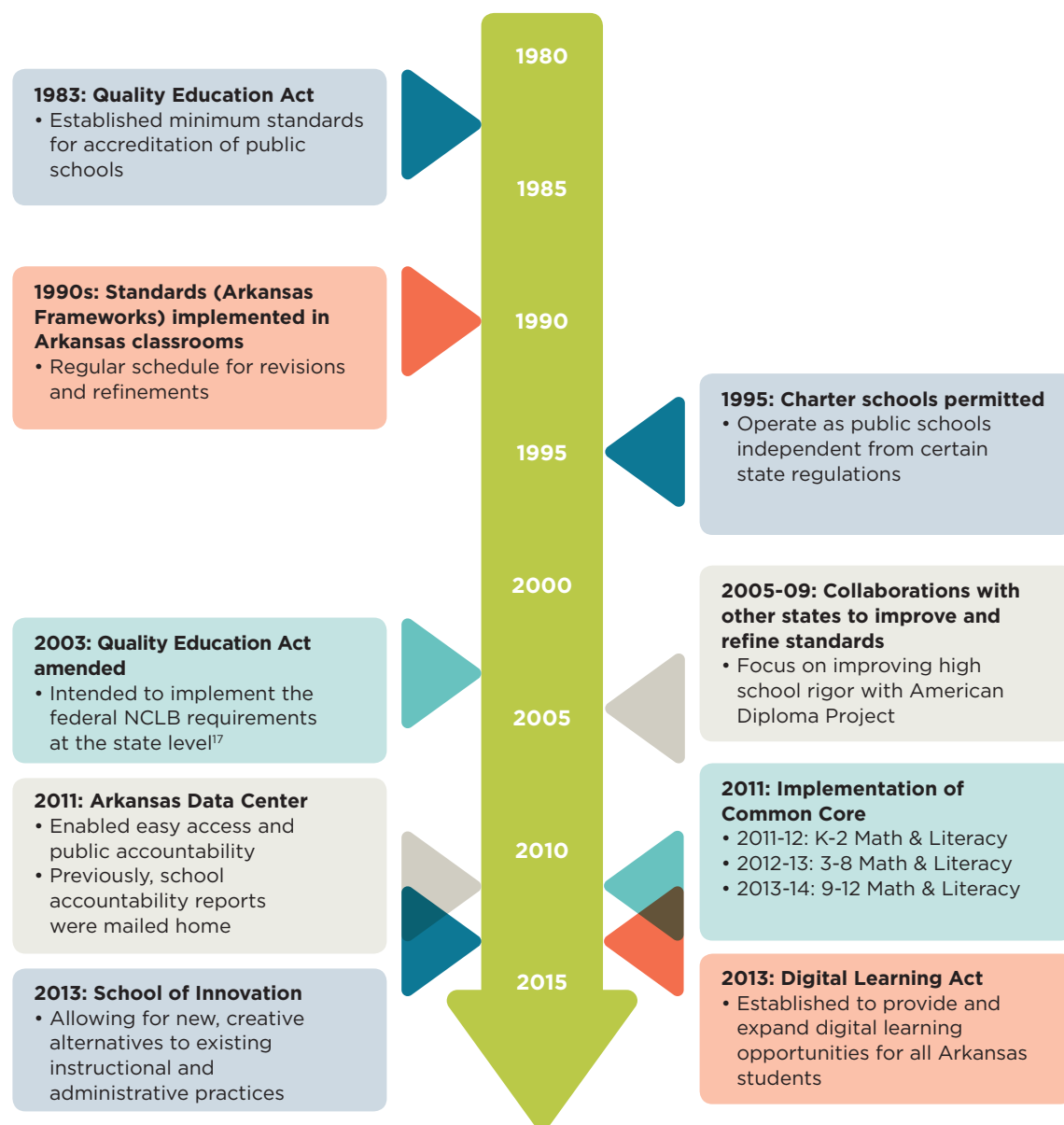
AAIMS focuses on working with teachers, students and schools on best practices for preparing for AP exams, including providing annual incentives for teachers, students and schools.

In looking at results for 2012-13, AAIMS participants accounted for 43% of qualifying scores and 41% of MSE exams, but only 14% of schools. In 2012, 17,700 students took AP exams through AAIMS, accounting for 28% of students who took AP exams in Arkansas that year. AAIMS is a strong example of a program that is helping more high-school students take AP exams and perform well on AP exams, better preparing them for the rigors of college-level coursework.

STRONG POLICIES & STANDARDS

Arkansas has strong policies and standards in place to support student outcomes. In fact, Arkansas has a long history of supporting education initiatives, working to establish standards and provide clear accountability since 1983. The state's leadership should continue to strive for innovation and excellence when establishing policies and standards for public school students. The groundwork has been laid, but there is still work to be done to dramatically improve student outcomes.

Policies & Standards Power Student Outcomes



Sources: Interviews with ADE; University of Arkansas Office of Education Policy "Quality Education Act of 2003"

▶ Common Core in Arkansas¹⁸

From 2011 to 2014, Arkansas implemented the K-12 Common Core State Standards, a set of research-based national education standards for math and English. Common Core will help Arkansas's schools meet the standards needed for students to succeed at every grade level. Adopting the Common Core means that a child in Arkansas is now expected to learn the same core knowledge and skills as a child in the same grade in Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana and 40 other states.

The state has also adopted assessments developed by the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). These assessments, which reflect the Common Core, were piloted in the 2013-14 school year across the state and will replace the current Benchmark exams in the 2015-16 school year.

Educators Meeting Quality Counts Standards

Arkansas is being recognized for success in equipping teachers and providing strong leadership. In 2012, Arkansas earned top honors from *Education Week* for meeting standards in teacher licensure and training.

LEADERSHIP METRICS:
1 of 3 states meeting all 4 standards

Standard	AR
1 State provides incentives for principals who work in targeted schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2 State has standards for licensure of school administrators	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3 State requirements for initial licensure include a supervised internship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4 State requirements for initial licensure include participation in an induction or mentoring program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

BEGINNING TEACHERS:
Arkansas had 3 of the 4 supports; most states had none

Standard	AR
1 All new teachers required to participate in a state-funded induction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2 All new teachers required to participate in a state-funded mentoring program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3 State has standards for selecting, training and/or matching mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4 State has reduced-workload policy for first-year teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
1 of 7 states meeting all standards

Standard	AR
1 State finances professional development for all districts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2 State has formal professional development standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3 State requires a specific amount of time to be set aside for professional development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4 State requires districts to align professional development with local priorities and goals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Source: Education Week Quality Counts Database 2012.¹⁹

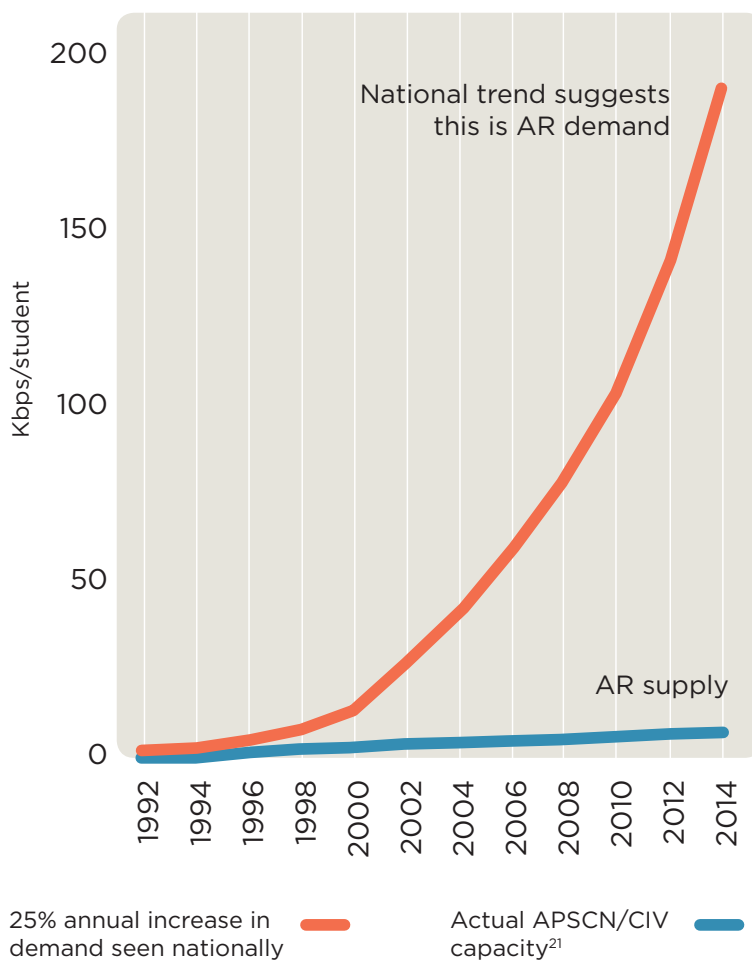
While Arkansas is recognized as a leader in meeting these standards, these efforts are not sufficient to improve student outcomes. The 2015 edition of *Education Week* shifted the focus from licensure and training to educational outcomes.

Expanding Digital Learning

Investing in high-speed Internet access is a priority for schools as they strive to take advantage of the opportunities made available through the Internet. Opportunities exist across many areas of education including augmenting classroom instruction, distance learning, professional development and learning management tools.

Arkansas approved the Digital Learning Act of 2013 to provide and expand digital learning opportunities for all Arkansas students. While this legislation is designed to make digital learning accessible throughout the state, broadband access in Arkansas is still severely limited, hindering schools from meeting the requirements.²⁰

Limited Broadband Access



Source: Arkansas Department of Education Digital Learning webpage

Innovative Learning Models

There are two innovative learning models in Arkansas: charter schools and schools of innovation.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

A charter school is publicly funded, but is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract (or charter) with the state. The school is exempt from certain state or local rules and regulations. However, it must meet the same accountability standards as traditional public schools.

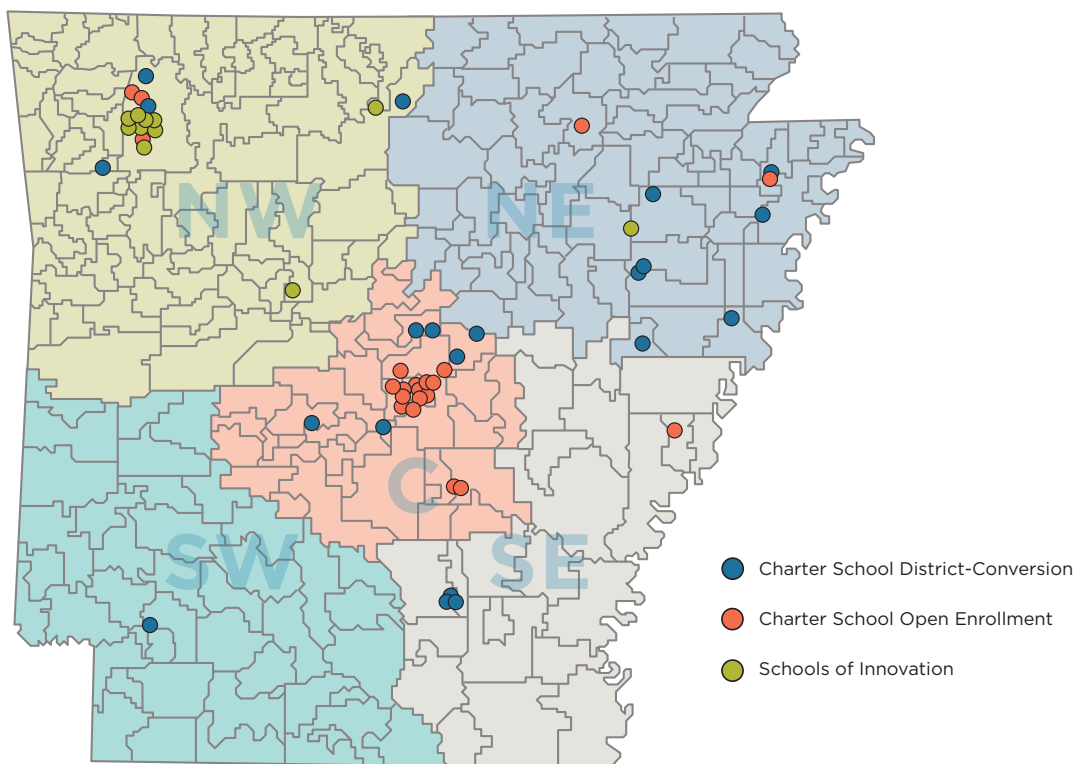
While charter schools are an option for Arkansas students and families, availability is limited. Fewer students in Arkansas attend charter schools compared to other states, with students in charter schools accounting for approximately 3% of the total number of Arkansas students.²²

SCHOOLS OF INNOVATION

In 2013, Arkansas created the Schools of Innovation program. Through the program, school districts and individual schools are encouraged to design new and creative alternatives to the existing instructional and administrative practices. These changes are intended to improve academic performance and learning. Approval to become a School of Innovation is determined by the Commissioner of Education, is granted for a four-year period, and can give schools flexibility on state laws and policies to implement their plans.

For the 2014-15 school year, five schools and one school district were named Schools of Innovation, serving approximately 9,000 students (less than 2% of public K-12 students in Arkansas).²³

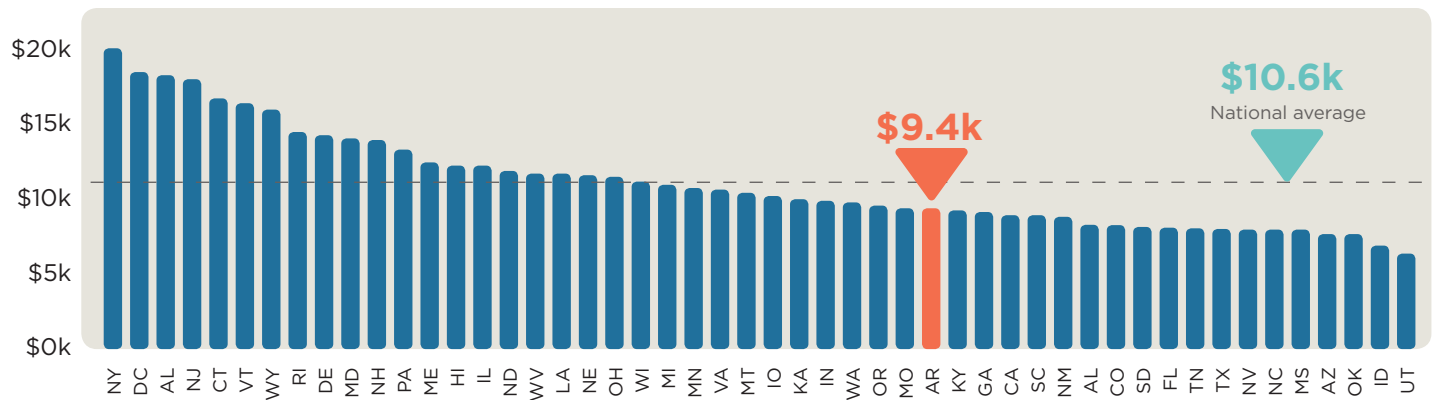
Charter Schools and Schools of Innovation in Arkansas as of December 2014



Source: ADE Charter Schools and Schools of Innovation website

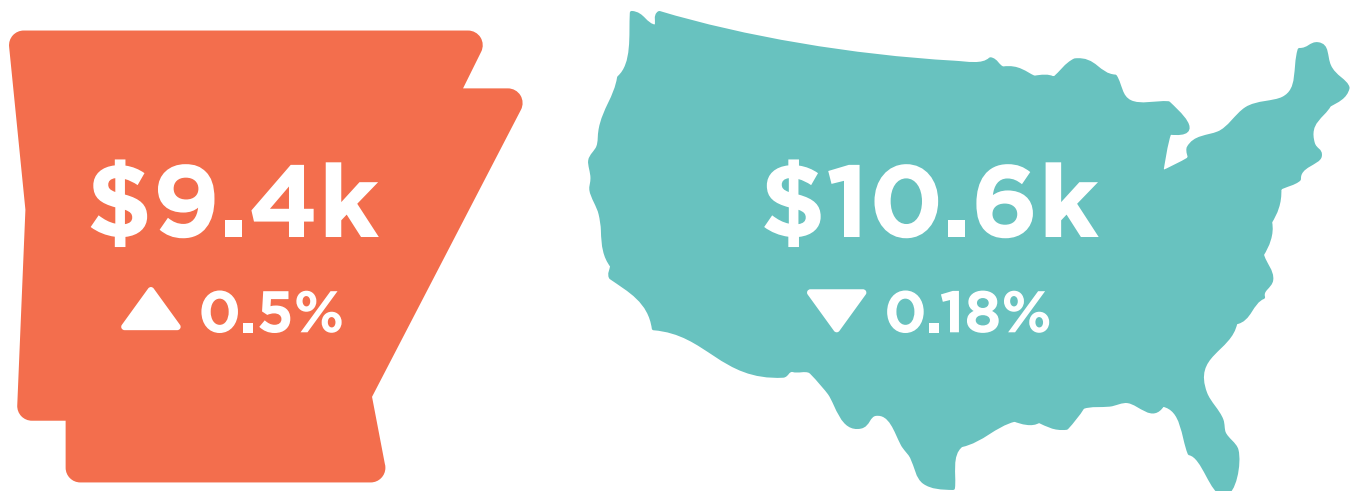
Investing in Education

Current Expenditure Per Pupil in 2012



Sources: Census of Governments: Finance - Survey of School System Finances <http://www.census.gov/govs/school/>. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

Arkansas has continued to invest more in its students, with a 0.5% increase in spending from 2007. Other states have cut funding, causing the national average to fall 0.18%. Our per-pupil expenditure has increased, bringing it closer to the national average – \$9,400 per pupil in Arkansas compared to \$10,600 nationally. Increased spending allows Arkansas to build a strong foundation for continued improvement in educational outcomes.²⁴



STUDENT OUTCOMES ARE BELOW ASPIRATIONS

While access to academic programs and opportunity is on the rise in Arkansas, student outcomes from pre-K through college are still low and far below aspirations. While the Academically Distressed schools are of particular concern, there are significant opportunities to improve rigor and policy execution across the state.

Access vs. Achievement

Even though Arkansas continues to improve access for students pre-K through college, student achievement is still far below aspirations.

Pre-K

Attending pre-K helps children, especially children from low-income families, develop the necessary skills for success in kindergarten and beyond. According to the Qualls Early Learning Inventory assessment, which assesses kindergarten readiness through observing six learned behaviors, a greater percentage of children from low-income families were considered 'developed' when attending the Arkansas Better Chance early childhood education program (ABC), Arkansas's state-funded pre-K, vs. not on each of the six behaviors assessed. Also, 7% more low income children were considered 'developed' across all six behaviors after pre-K vs. not. Furthermore, when these children were tracked longitudinally, attending ABC was found to have led to better scores in language, math and literacy at the end of first and second grade, and better scores in literacy at the end of 3rd grade.

However, further evaluation and potential program adjustments may be needed to be sure that all children are fully developed in all necessary skill areas. For those who attended pre-K, only 18% of low-income children were considered developed in all six QELI categories: 31% were developed in at least 5 categories, 43% were developed in at least 4 categories and 57% were developed in 3 or less categories.²⁵

For low-income children who attended pre-K, only 18% were considered 'developed' in all six QELI categories: 31% in at least 5 categories, 43% in at least 4 categories and 57% in 3 or less categories.

Arkansas ranks in the bottom 20 states – and dropping – on 4th- and 8th-grade national tests in math and literacy.

Elementary & Middle School

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what American students know in various subject areas. For Arkansas 4th- and 8th-graders, the NAEP shows modest improvement in math and reading from 2005 to today, but the improvement did not keep pace with national averages. Arkansas's 4th-grade rankings dropped in both categories from 33rd to 36th. The 8th-grade ranking for reading remained flat at 38th in the nation and dropped in math from 40th to 42nd in the nation.²⁶

College

Arkansas is among the top 20 states for students attending college. However, it appears that students are not prepared when they get to college. Almost 50% of all students enrolling in public universities require remedial coursework, and Arkansas's six-year college graduation rate is among the lowest in the nation.²⁷

Only 20% of students taking the ACT met college-ready benchmarks in all four subjects.

Almost 50% of all students enrolling in public universities require remedial coursework.

Arkansas is among the lowest in the nation for college graduation and degree attainment rates.

▶ Elementary Schools Moving the Needle²⁸

Although it was once among Little Rock School District's state-identified "priority" schools – the 5% lowest-performing schools in Arkansas – Wilson Elementary School now finds itself on the much shorter list of state-named "exemplary" schools. There were only nine of the latter for the 2013-14 school year.

Wilson was recognized for sizable year-to-year achievement gains, specifically for the gains made by pupils who are poor, require special education services or are non-native English language learners.

According to the Arkansas Education Report from the Office for Education Policy at University of Arkansas, Wilson was among the Top 20 (#4) Most Improved Elementary Schools based on Benchmark mathematics achievement from 2009-14. The student

average increased from 58% proficient/advanced initially to 87% proficient/advanced. Wilson also was among the Top 20 (#3) Most Improved Elementary Schools for literacy achievement.

According to a May 27, 2014, article in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, "Faculty members and other observers of [Wilson Elementary] list many reasons for the school's recent achievement gains, including the school's small size, its care for the individual child, its partnerships with churches whose members mentor pupils, its analysis of student test data to identify and teach to each child's needs, and the direct services the school receives from the Arkansas Department of Education and Pearson School Achievement Services, a school improvement company."

Success at Wilson is also attributed to

literacy and math coaches, who were hired in 2012 as trainers and resources for teachers.

Similarly, Jones Elementary School in Springdale improved, with the percentage of students reading on grade level increasing from 26% to 73%.

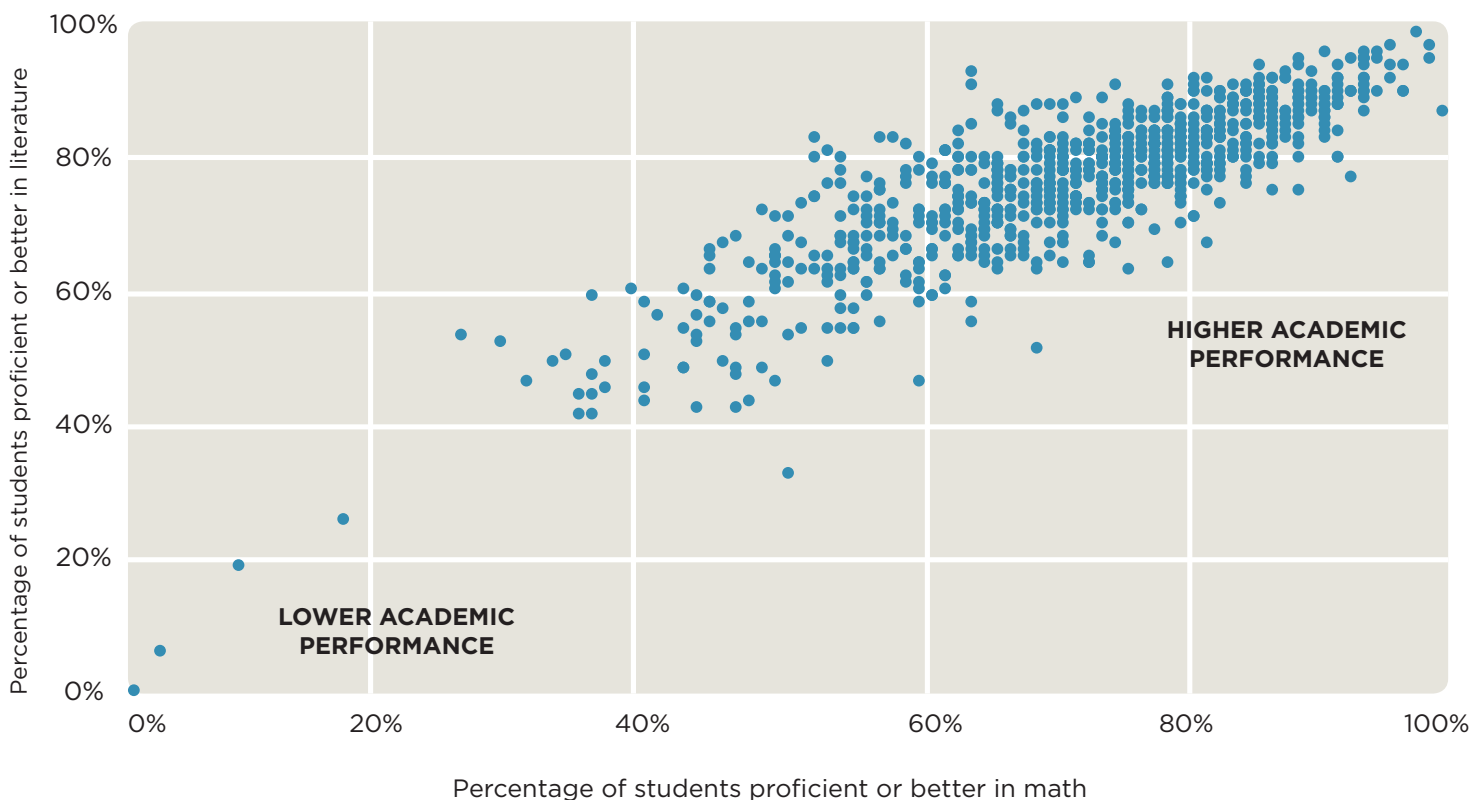
For Jones Elementary, educators credit their data-driven approach, the school's teamwork, and their principal, Melissa Fink, for their drastic improvements. The school makes decisions based on the data teachers are collecting in the classroom and the data the school is collecting from parents. The teachers focus not just on their own classrooms but on the grade as a whole, and they listen and learn from each other. Fink places a strong emphasis on growth for her teachers – setting goals as teachers in the same way that their students set goals.



Academic Performance Varies by School

Student academic performance varies by school across the state. Most schools have more than 60% of students scoring proficient or better in math and literature on Augmented Benchmark Exams (ABE).

Average Scores by School on ABE Grades 3-8, 2013-14²⁹



Source: Arkansas DOE 2013-2014 Benchmark Exam Data by District

Academic Distress in Arkansas³⁰

Schools are identified as being in Academic Distress if 49.5% or less of students score at or above proficiency on a composite of math and literacy tests over a three-year period. While the majority of Arkansas schools are not in this category, many are performing below aspirations.

Under old regulations put in place by the Arkansas General Assembly in 2004, only school districts could be placed in Academic Distress. The requirements had to include school data for all schools in the district, meaning the criteria and

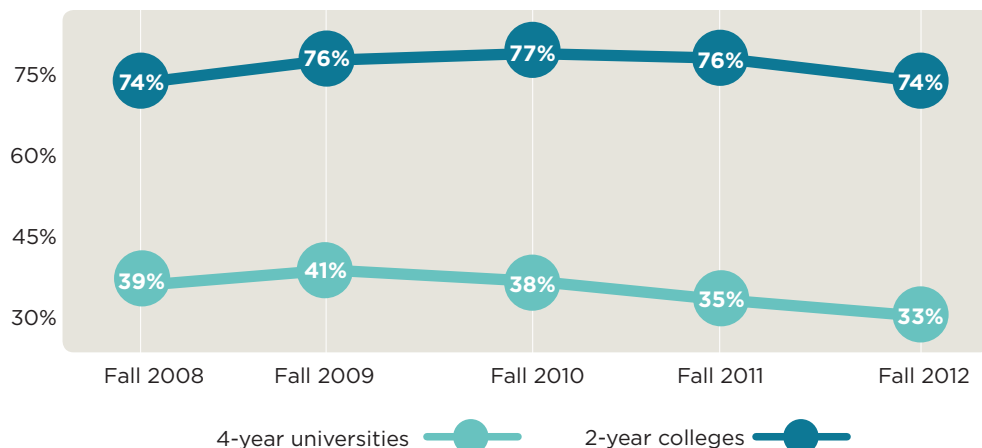
standards for takeover were quite high. Therefore, only a few school districts were ever placed in Academic Distress. A few had been placed in Fiscal Distress, and a handful had even been taken over by the state for financial mismanagement.

In 2013, legislators passed new policy that changed the rules, now allowing for individual schools to be put in Academic Distress. Following the writing of new rules and regulations, the State Board of Education identified 26 schools and two school districts to be officially in Academic Distress.

Increased Enrollment in College Remedial Courses

Although 65% of high school graduates attend college, 74% of students attending 2-year colleges and 33% of students attending 4-year colleges require remediation. Such high remediation rates suggest that although students may be graduating from high school and attending college, they may not be well prepared to succeed in higher education. This is especially a concern because students requiring remediation are far less likely to graduate from college.

'Anytime' Remediation Rates: Fall 2008 to Fall 2012



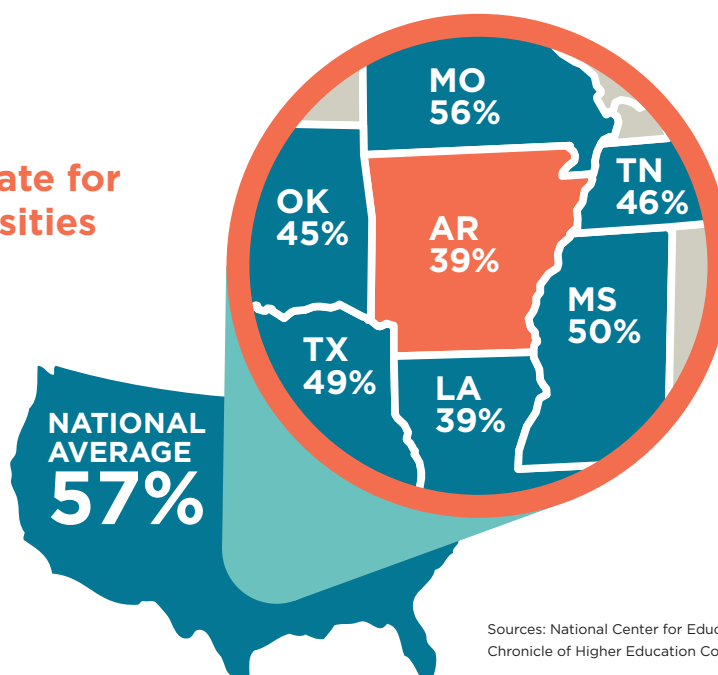
'Anytime' remediation rate is defined to be percentage of first-time degree-seeking students enrolled in a remedial class; the balance was placed in college-level coursework

Source: 2013 Comprehensive Arkansas Higher Education Annual Report

Low College Graduation Rates

Despite an above-average rate of students going to college, Arkansas is near the very bottom in college graduation rates. In 2010, Arkansas's college graduation rate was 39%, compared to 57% nationally in 2012. Arkansas ranked 48th in the nation in 2010 for first-time, full-time undergraduate enrollees in public 4-year institutions graduating in six years.

6-Year Graduation Rate for Public 4-Year Universities



Sources: National Center for Education Statistics Fast Facts and The Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion webpages

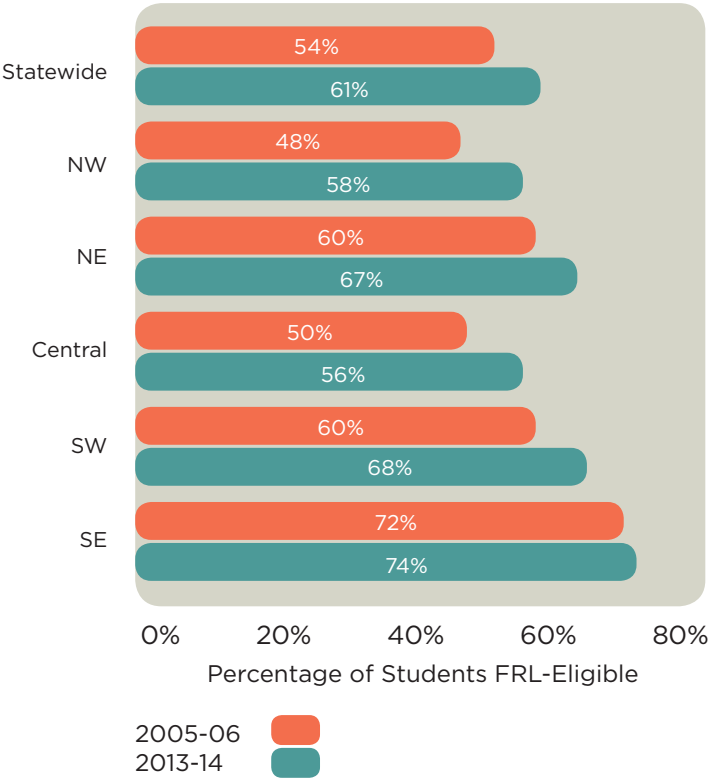
SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Arkansas is making strides to close the student achievement gap between students within our borders. However, significant achievement gaps still exist. In order to close these gaps and improve outcomes for all students, Arkansas must address economic, racial and even geographic disparities, both in and outside of the classroom.

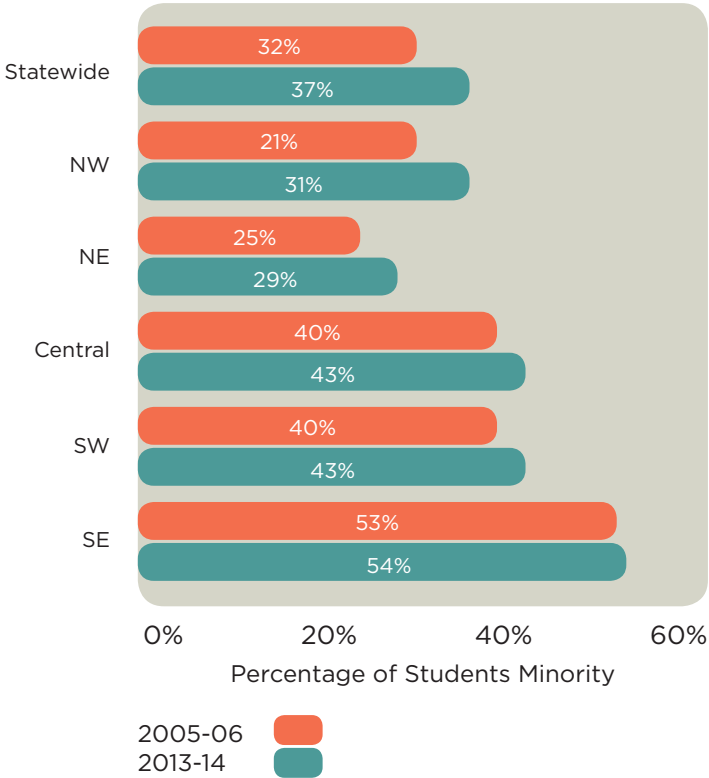
Population Changes in Arkansas

Historically, FRL-eligible and minority students perform below other students on national tests – although that gap has narrowed in the last decade – and both populations have increased steadily throughout Arkansas. While the Northwest region has seen the greatest change since 2005-06, the Southeast region continues to have the largest percentages of both minority and FRL-eligible students in the state.

Percentage of Students FRL-Eligible in Each Region



Percentage of Minority Students in Each Region



Source: Office for Education Policy demographic databases, 2005-06 and 2013-14



▶ Overcoming Poverty by Investing in Education³¹

Nearly three out of 10 kids are living in poverty in Arkansas. As dramatic as this figure is, research suggests that the true economic picture is even bleaker. More than half of all Arkansas children live in a household that struggles financially. Unfortunately, Arkansas is seeing the gap between low-income students and their more affluent counterparts grow wider.

According to Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, studies have repeatedly shown that children living in poverty are more prone to negative educational outcomes such as poor

academic performance, low vocabularies, lower reading and achievement scores, higher drop-out rates and lower college graduation rates.

Poverty is also associated with higher rates of teen pregnancy, low self-esteem and feelings of anxiety, unhappiness and dependence. Children who experience poverty earlier in life have a harder time overcoming its impacts.

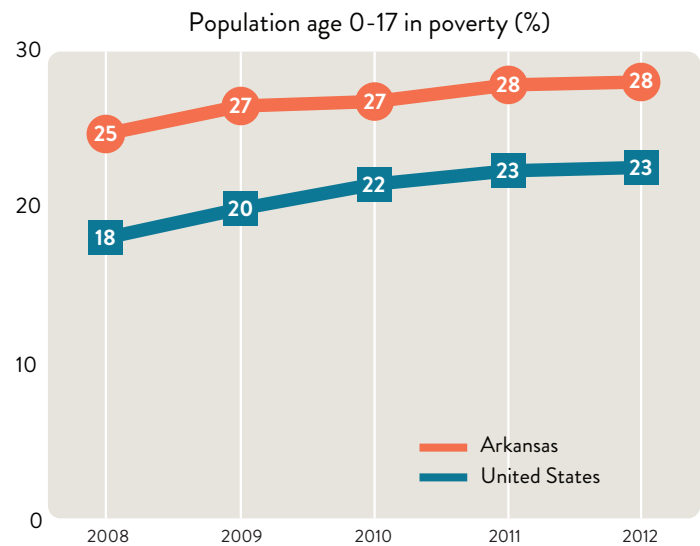
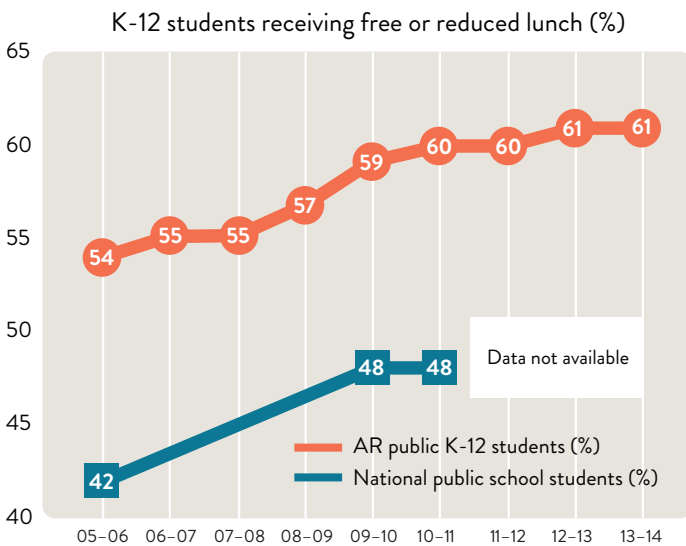
In some instances, poverty is compounded by an unstable home environment. Children in these situations are more likely to act

out, experience disobedience and aggression and have a more difficult time getting along with other children.

One way to combat Arkansas's high level of poverty over the long term is to invest in education. Higher levels of education allow Arkansans to get better jobs and provide for their families. Policies that help low-income children succeed academically also improve the odds that they will be able to get an education that helps them find better paying jobs.

Arkansas's Students are More Likely to be FRL-Eligible or in Poverty Than National Average

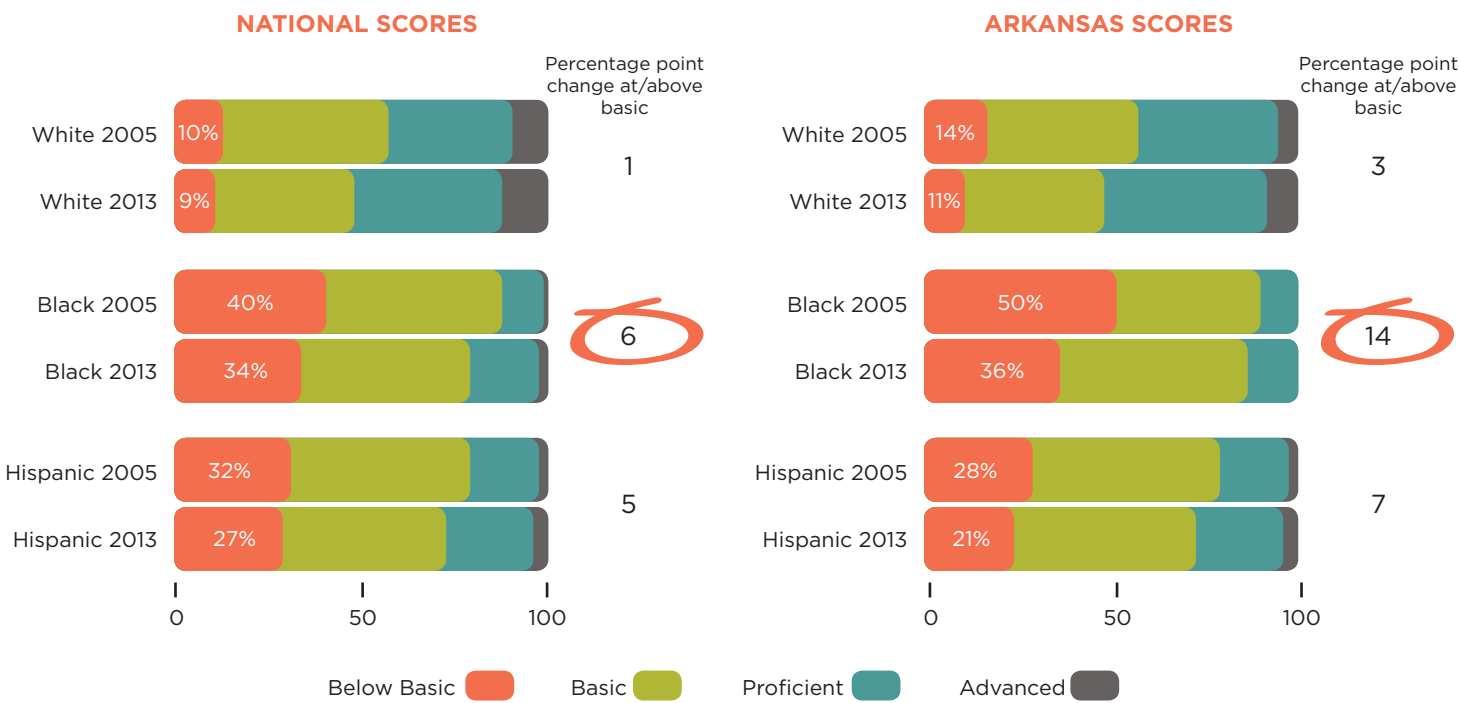
The impact of poverty and financial struggle can be seen in the classroom with potentially long-term effects. In 2010-11, Arkansas had the 6th-highest percentage in the nation of FRL-eligible students. A year later, in 2012, Arkansas had the 5th-highest percentage of children, ages 0-17, in poverty.³²



Minority Achievement Gaps

The achievement gap between white students and minority students has narrowed since 2005, with black and Hispanic students outpacing their white peers in terms of improved scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In 2013, black students who scored basic or better increased by 14 percentage points in Arkansas compared to a national increase of only 6 percentage points. Despite these gains, the achievement gap for minority students is significant.

Narrowing the Gap in 4th Grade Math Scores (NAEP)

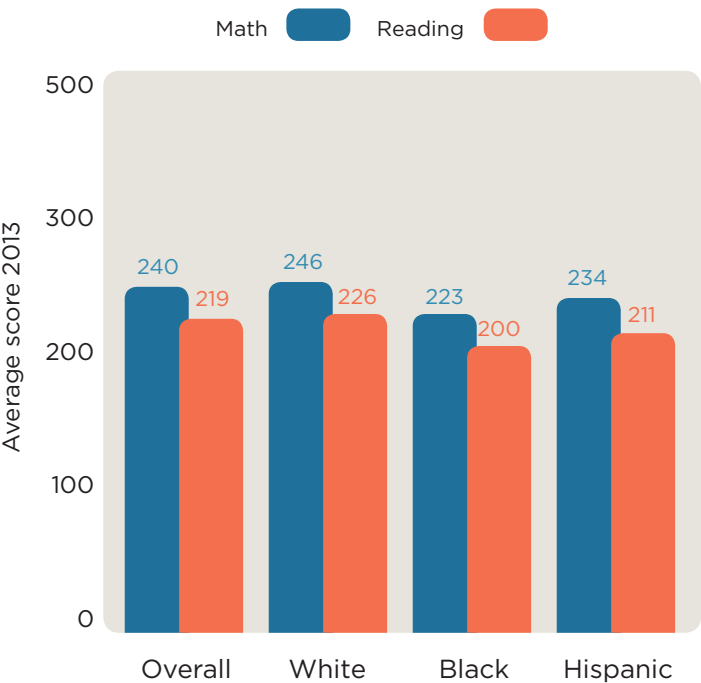


Source: NAEP Database data for 2005 and 2013.

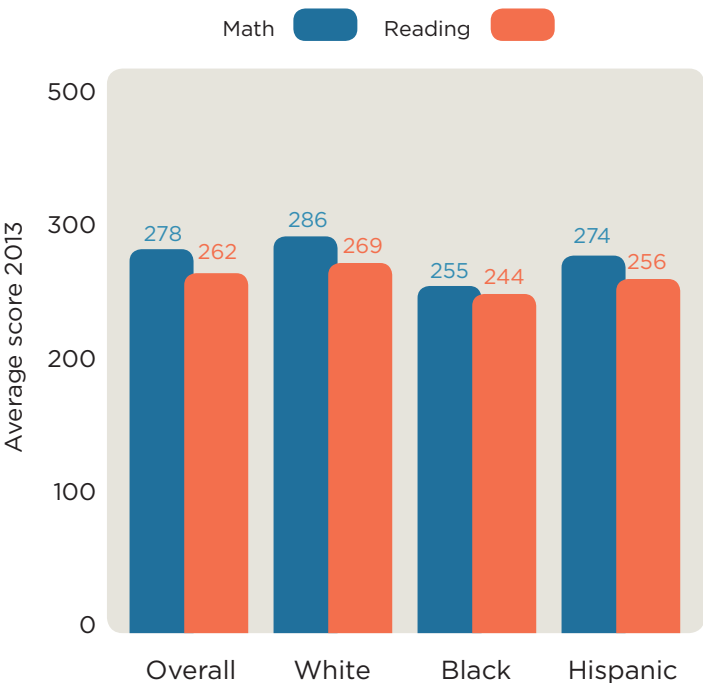


Narrowing the Gaps: 4th & 8th Grades

4th Grade NAEP Scores³³



8th Grade NAEP Scores




Change in Average 4th Grade NAEP Scores 2005-13

	MATH	READING
Overall	+4	+1
White	+3	0
Black	+9	+7
Hispanic	+5	-1

Change in Average 8th Grade NAEP Scores 2005-13

	MATH	READING
Overall	+6	+4
White	+5	3
Black	+12	+7
Hispanic	+7	+6

 Growth higher than white peers suggesting the achievement gap is narrowing.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Mathematics and Reading Assessments. Office for Education Policy Benchmark Exam databases

Regional Achievement Gaps

Arkansas has high- and low-performing schools in every region, but access to high-performing schools varies significantly by region. While the Central (particularly Little Rock) and Southeast regions have a disproportionate number of low-performing schools, the Northwest region has a disproportionate number of high-performing schools.

In addition, according to the Arkansas Department of Education, most academically distressed schools are in the Central or Southeast region. And none in the Northwest.

Regional differences are especially challenging for minority and lower-income students who – in disproportionate numbers – attend school in the lower-performing regions.³⁴

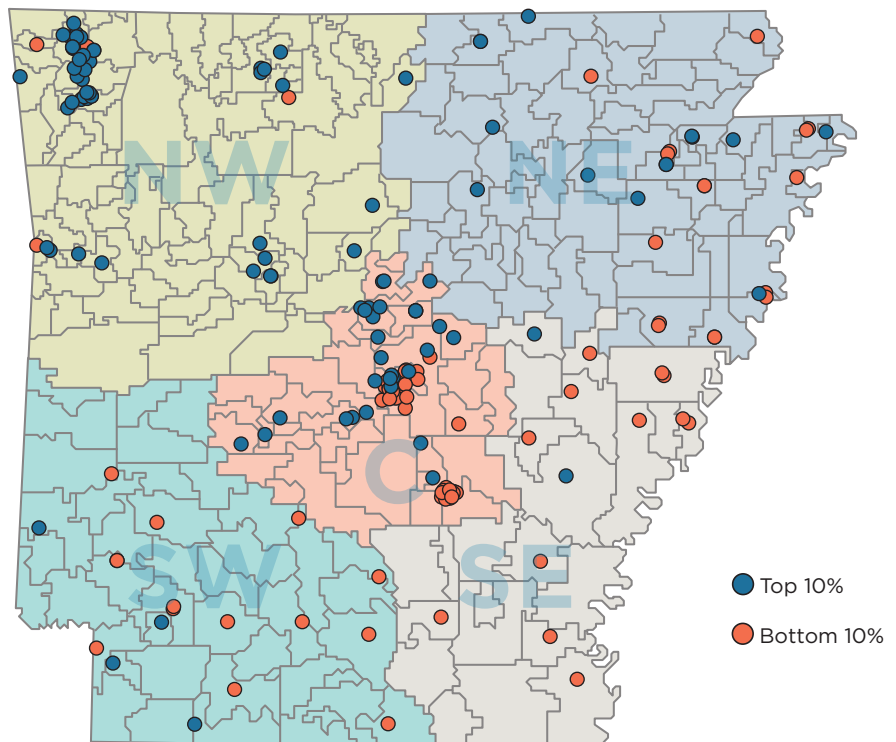
There are high-performing schools in every region, but access to such schools varies significantly.

Students in NW have the highest math and literacy proficiency; students in SE have the lowest.

Most students in NW attend schools in top 50% of performance.

Most in SE attend schools in bottom 50%.

Top and Bottom 10% in ABE Proficiency for Schools Serving Grades 3–8



Source: Office of Education Policy Benchmark Exam database 2013-14

Conclusion

There's no doubt that Arkansas has made progress in improving the education of our students. We have seen many inspiring examples of great teaching by educators across the state. Yet there is still a long way to go to be sure that every student is provided the best education to serve them in the future.

This report is designed to help you better understand the state of education in Arkansas and how we compare nationally. The facts and figures found in this report set the foundation for creating a holistic plan to improve public education in our state.

This is our home and these are our children. We owe them, the future of our state, the best education possible. We owe the employers who have committed to building businesses here the most educated workforce. We are committed to making that happen, and we hope you'll join us in the journey.

Call to Action

We need all Arkansans to do their part in helping move the state forward. Here are a few steps you can take today!

1. Visit www.ForwardArkansas.org and use our online survey to share your thoughts on public education in Arkansas.
2. Share this report with your friends, families, teachers and community leaders. We make it easy through our social portals on Facebook and Twitter.
3. Encourage conversations in your community and email us at info@ForwardArkansas.org to tell us about your progress.
4. Sign up for our e-newsletter (on the home page of the website) to stay informed about ForwARd Arkansas's progress and how you can help.

Partnering Organizations



The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

www.wrfoundation.org

For 40 years, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has helped to build and sustain the organizations that serve and strengthen Arkansas. Through grantmaking and strategic partnerships, the foundation works hard to help close the economic and educational gaps that leave too many Arkansas families in persistent poverty.



Walton Family Foundation

www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org

When Sam and Helen Walton launched their modest retail business in 1962, one of their goals was to increase opportunity and improve the lives of others along the way. This principle drives the philanthropic mission of the Walton Family Foundation. By working with grantees and collaborating with other philanthropic organizations, the foundation is dedicated to making a positive difference in three focus areas: K-12 education, freshwater and marine conservation, and quality of life initiatives in our home region.



ARKANSAS
DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

The Arkansas Department of Education

www.arkansased.org

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is a dedicated service agency that provides leadership, resources and technical support to school districts, school and educators. ADE serves students, parents and the general public by protecting the public trust through adherence to laws, strong stewardship of public funds and accountability for student performance.

Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science Inc.

(AAIMS): AAIMS, an affiliate of the National Math and Science Initiative, is a program that aims to increase the number of students taking and earning qualifying scores on AP Exams in these subjects. It is currently run in 14% of Arkansas's high schools.

<http://uarl.edu/aAAIMS/>

Arkansas Better Chance (ABC): The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program was created in 1991 to offer high-quality early education services to children ages 0 to 5 exhibiting developmental and socioeconomic risk factors. In 2003, the Arkansas General Assembly made a commitment to expand early childhood education funding by \$100 million to serve low-income 3- and 4-year-old children with high-quality prekindergarten services. This expansion, known as Arkansas Better Chance for School Success, has become the state prekindergarten program. ABC is only available to students with family income that is 200 percent or less of the federal poverty line. It operates as a grant program, and participating providers must renew ABC grants annually.

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dccece/Pages/aboutDCCECE.aspx>; ABC Shrinks Gaps (Arkansas Research Center)

Academic Distress: This term is used to describe a school or district that has, for a sustained period of time, demonstrated a lack of student achievement. Specifically, this is a classification assigned to (a) any public school or school district in which 49.5 percent or less of its students achieve proficient or advanced on a composite of math and literacy tests for the most recent three-year period; or (b) a Needs Improvement school (Priority) or a school district with a Needs Improvement (Priority) school that has not made the progress required under the school's Priority Improvement Plan (PIP). A Needs Improvement school is a school that has not met its annual targets in performance growth and high school graduation rates. See the Arkansas Accountability Addendum to Elementary Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request for more information.

http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/ESEA/ESEA_Flexibility_Accountability_Addendum.pdf, ADE Rules Governing ACTAAP and the Academic Distress Program, Sept 2014: http://www.arkansased.org/public/userfiles/rules/Current/ACTAAP-FINAL_-_September_2014.pdf

ACT: The ACT is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in English, mathematics, reading and science.

<http://www.actstudent.org/faq/what.html>

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE): The administrative organization that carries out the state's education laws and policies of the state board.

Advanced Placement Exams (AP): AP Exams are rigorous, multiple-component tests that are administered at high schools each May. High school students can earn college credit, placement or both for qualifying AP Exam scores. Each AP Exam has a corresponding AP course and provides a standardized measure of what students have learned in the AP classroom.

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/ap>

Augmented Benchmark Exams: The Augmented Benchmark Exam is an assessment that is given in the spring to students in grades 3-8. It is a combination of questions from a criterion-reference test and questions from a norm-reference test. The criterion-reference test, commonly called the Benchmark, is based on specific student learning expectations (SLEs) found in the state frameworks. It is expected that every concept has been taught by the teacher and the student has learned the skill. The Benchmark test covers SLEs in math and literacy. Science SLEs are included in grades 5 and 7. Scores from the Benchmark are reported as below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. In the fall of the following school year, parents receive a brochure containing their child's scores and an explanation of the scores. An Academic Improvement Plan will be developed to identify skills where a student needs extra support to be successful in school if the student scored basic or below basic. Students scoring proficient or advanced combine to form our percentage reported as AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). This percentage – or AYP – is reported to the public. The second part – augmented – of this assessment is the norm-reference test called ITBS. Questions from the ITBS are not based on Arkansas learning objectives. Because it is norm-referenced, it measures an individual student's performance to a nationwide group of students. Parents will receive their child's ITBS scores and an explanation as part of the Benchmark brochure. Scores from this part of the Augmented Benchmark are not part of the AYP calculations.

<http://www.cabotschools.org/curriculum/assessment-testing/benchmark-exams-grades-3-8>

Charter school: Charter schools are public schools that operate under a "charter," or "charter contract," which frees them from many regulations created for traditional public schools while holding them accountable for academic and financial results. The charter contract is between the charter school's sponsoring entity and the Arkansas State Board of Education or the Commissioner of Education.

<http://www.arkansased.org/faqs/105/what-is-a-charter-school>

Common Core State Standards: The Common Core State Standards is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career and life, regardless of where they live.

<http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/assessment/definitions-of-common-terms>

Degree Attainment Rate: Percentage of the state's working-age population (25-64) with at least an associate's degree.

Education Week - Quality Counts: Quality Counts is *Education Week's* annual report on state-level efforts to improve public education. It is published in January.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/index.html>

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL): The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. A student is eligible for free lunch at school if his or her family income is below 130 percent of the poverty line; the student is eligible for a reduced-price lunch if the family income is below 185 percent of the poverty line.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subject areas. Assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and beginning in 2014, in technology and engineering literacy.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/>

P-16: Refers to the full spectrum of education from pre-K through the first four years of post-secondary education.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC): The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a group of states working together to develop a set of assessments that measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and in their careers. These K-12 assessments in mathematics and English language arts/literacy give teachers, schools, students and parents better information regarding student performance, and tools to help teachers customize learning to meet student needs. The PARCC assessments will be ready for states to administer during the 2014-15 school year.

<http://www.parcconline.org/about-parcc>

Poverty: Poverty thresholds are the dollar amounts used to determine poverty status. Each person is assigned one out of 48 possible poverty thresholds, which vary according to size of the family and ages of the members. The same thresholds are used throughout the United States; they do not vary geographically. As an example, in 2013, the poverty threshold for a family of four (two are children) was \$24,421.

<https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>

Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI): Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI) is an observational tool for use in the primary grades to identify student development in six areas related to school learning. The inventory observes behaviors developed in school so observations can be used to inform instruction and improve achievement.

Remediation Rate: Since 1988, all entering first-year students seeking an associate degree or higher from an Arkansas public college or university must meet Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board assessment and placement standards in the disciplines of English, math and reading. A cut-off score of 19 on the ACT exam (or the equivalent on the ASSET, SAT or COMPASS tests) is used for each of the three subject areas. In all charts, the remedial data are based on students who meet two criteria: (1) not meeting the board's cut-off score and (2) being assigned to enroll in developmental-level coursework.

Comprehensive Arkansas Higher Education Report, Dec 2013, Remediation Rates.

Appendix

Roles in Education in Arkansas

STRUCTURE	RESPONSIBILITIES
State Board of Education (9 members, 7-year terms, appointed by governor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General supervision • Set accreditation standards and recommend courses of study for the public schools and teacher training institutions • Issue licenses based on credentials to teach in public schools
Arkansas Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison between legislative action and district school boards • Carry out the state's education laws and policies of the state board
Local school boards (1 per school district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with state and federal laws • Determine district's education philosophy • Choose the superintendent and work constructively with him or her • Develop, adopt and review policies that will attract and keep personnel who can promote the district's AAIMS • Adopt policies and procedures to ensure finances are legally and effectively managed
Superintendent (1 per school district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "CEO" of the school district: prepare budget and authorize purchases, reporting on progress toward goals • Provide recommendations to the school board about suspension, termination or non-renewal of a district employee • Provide substantive leadership for the schools' education programs and quality professional development for staff

Other Associated Departments

STRUCTURE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Arkansas Department of Human Services (Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate child care and early childhood education programs, including operations of the Arkansas Better Chance program (state-funded pre-K for low-income students) • Ensure child care centers and family child care homes meet state-minimum licensing standards
Arkansas Department of Human Services (Division of Behavioral Health Services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Delivery System for children with severe to moderate behavioral health needs • Arkansas Wraparound, a service for families with complicated needs (e.g., involved with multiple service agencies – juvenile justice, child welfare, schools, mental health, etc.)
Arkansas Department of Career Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee career and technical education programs in the secondary schools, career centers, apprenticeship programs, two post-secondary tech institutes, vo-tech school within the Department of Correction and adult education programs • Approve state educational programs for veterans' benefits
Arkansas Department of Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage state's scholarship and financial aid programs • Recommend higher education budgets to legislature • Assurance of academic program quality and viability • Professional development for faculty and staff • Educational support to business and industry

Footnotes

1. **Sources:** The Chronicle of Higher Education *College Completion* webpage (Winter 2015). <http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state>; Data is based on IPEDS, which tracks completions of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergrad students. See also National Center for Education Statistics webpage (Winter 2015). <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40>. See also 2013 Comprehensive Arkansas Higher Education Annual Report, Section 4: “Retention and Graduation Rates.” http://www.highereducation.org/reports/college_readiness/gap.shtml.

2. **Sources:** Pre-K spending data from NIEER 2013 Yearbook, pre-K volume from Ed Week Quality Counts and US Census data. All K-12 data from Arkansas Department of Education SIS State Profiles, unless otherwise noted. Higher Ed data from IPEDS and SREB. Teacher data a special pull by ADE. Per pupil expenditures from US Census, NCES.

3. **Note:** Provided in NIEER 2013 yearbook as 2006 and 2013 state spending per child enrolled; constant USD 2013. Note that state-funded pre-K enrollment has increased dramatically, from ~11k in 2005-06 to ~19k in 2012-13 (NIEER).

4. **Note:** Data compares 2005-06 and 2014-15, as reporting issue for 2013-14 prohibits comparisons.

5. **Note:** FRL stands for Free or Reduced Lunch. A student is eligible for free lunch at school if his or her family income is below 130 percent of the poverty line; the student is eligible for a reduced-price lunch if the family income is below 185 percent of the poverty line.

6. **Note:** The years are FY 2007 and FY 2012 in this case; constant FY 2012 values are shown (calculated using CPI inflator).

7. **Note:** This is for 2011-12, data not available for 2012-13 (from SREB).

8. **Note:** Minority includes all races except white.

9. **Note:** The student population by race is estimated from the Office of Education Policy’s 2013-14 demographic data, which provides, by region, an absolute # of students and the percent of students in the region of each ethnicity. This was used to derive the number of students of each ethnicity. As a result of rounding in the percentage data, student volumes may be off by 1-2k. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. To estimate the percent of the population in poverty in each region, computed a weighted average by county, using % of total population in poverty (estimate from 2012 Area and Small Income Estimates). A student is “in poverty” if the family income is less than the threshold set by the US Census

Bureau. The thresholds vary by size and family composition. Family income is defined as income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (e.g., public housing, food stamps). The same thresholds are used throughout the US, but are updated annually for inflation via CPI. Although the thresholds in some sense reflect family needs, they are intended for use as a statistical yardstick, not as a complete description of what people and families need to live. In 2013, a family of four (two children) would be in poverty if the family income was less than \$23,624. See <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html> for more information.

Source: Office for Education Policy, 2013-14 demographic database for ethnicity and FRL. Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates database (source data: American Community Survey).

10. **Sources:** Source citations for the summary page can be found in the source citations for each report section.

11. **Source:** Ed Week Quality Counts database accessed 10/21/2014.

12. **Source:** <http://arkansasnews.com/news/arkansas/arkansas-awarded-60-million-grant-expand-pre-k-program>

13. **Source:** Arkansas Times article, July 11, 2013

14. **Note A:** Using adjusted cohort graduation rate, which is considered the most accurate measure available for reporting on-time graduation rates (Seastrom et al. 2006b). A 4-year ACGR is defined as the number of students who graduate in 4 years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for that graduating class. The term “adjusted cohort” means the students who enter grade 9 plus any students who transfer into the cohort in grades 9-12 minus any students who are removed from the cohort because they transferred out, moved out of the country, or were deceased (34 C.F.R. § 200.19). The Office of Education Policy’s graduation rate database also reports 2011-12 adjusted graduation rate as 84%.

Note B: College-going rate is defined as the number of first-time freshmen who graduated from high school in the past year from state X enrolled anywhere in the U.S./Public and private high school graduates. 2010 is the last year for which this was calculated. Note that the Arkansas Dept of Higher Ed’s 2013 Comprehensive Report calculates the 2012 college-going rate as 52%; this difference is potentially due to the fact that only public high school students are considered.

Sources: NCES Public HS Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School years 2010-11 and 2011-12. See NCHEMS Information Center for college-going rate, which relies on information from Tom Mortenson—*Postsecondary Education Opportunity* <http://www.postsecondary.org>

15. **Note:** Number of exams taken by the current year's 11th and 12th grade AP students (number of exams not given) divided by the state's "11th and 12th Grade Enrollment" x 1000. 11th and 12th grade enrollment represent enrollment for public schools only, from Applied Educational Research Inc. of Princeton, NJ.

Sources: College Board National AP Report. See also ACT Condition of College and Career Readiness Report 2012.

16. **Source:** Arkansas AIMS webpage: <http://ualr.edu/aaims/home/overview/>. Arkansas AIMS results, pdf accessed from: <http://ualr.edu/aaims/2013/12/10/2011-2012-result>

17. **Note:** NCLB = No Child Left Behind

18. **Note:** PARCC, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers is a group of states collaborating to design assessments to measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and career.

Sources: <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>; http://www.arkansased.org/faqs/faq_categories/common-core-state-standards <http://officefordpolicy.com/2014/11/05/election-results-are-in-how-will-this-impact-education-in-arkansas/>; <http://www.parconline.org/about-parcc>

19. **Note:** 2012 was most recent year data was available for a state by state comparison in the Education Week Quality Counts Database.

20. **Source:** Arkansas Department of Education *Digital Learning* webpage (Winter, 2014). <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/digital-learning-k-12>

21. **Note:** APSCN/CIV is the current K-12 education network.

22. **Sources:** ADE Charter Schools website: <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/charter-schools>. Enrollment estimates from Office for Ed Policy demographic database, 2013-14.

23. **Source:** ADE Schools of Innovation website: <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/learning-services/schools-of-innovation> and Related Files.

24. **Note A:** Statewide data on current expenditures collected and aggregated from states by Census Bureau, statewide enrollment from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Note B: Growth rate calculated on real 2012 dollars i.e. adjusted for inflation using the CPI inflator.

Sources: Census of Governments: Finance - Survey of School System Finances (FY2007-FY2012): <http://www.census.gov/govs/school/>. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

25. **Note:** Low-income defined in study as being free or reduced lunch eligible. For example, according to the Arkansas Research Center study "ABC Shrinks Gap in Kindergarten Readiness for Economically Disadvantaged Students", for a family of four an income of \$43,568 or less is classified as free or reduced lunch eligible.

Sources: Arkansas Research Center, ADE expert interview, National Institute for Early Education Research: "Longitudinal effects of the Arkansas Better Chance Program: Findings from First Grade through Fourth Grade": <http://nieer.org/publications/latest-research/longitudinal-effects-arkansas-better-chance-program-findings-first>.

26. **Sources:** U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 Mathematics and Reading Assessments.

27. **Note A:** The four subjects tested in the ACT are: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science.

Note B: Using "anytime" remediation rate, which is defined to be % of first-time degree seeking students enrolled in a remedial class; the balance was placed in college-level coursework.

Sources: ACT Profile Report for Arkansas, Graduating Class of 2013. 2013 Comprehensive Arkansas Higher Education Annual Report, Section 4: "Remediation Rates": http://www.highereducation.org/reports/college_readiness/gap.shtml. http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/no.state=AR§or=public_four; data is based on IPEDS, which tracks completions of first time, full-time degree seeking undergrad students.

28. **Sources:** <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2015/01/teamwork-data-big-gains-at-jones-elementary-school/>; Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas; Arkansas Democrat-Gazette article, May 27, 2014

29. **Note:** School w/ 0% scoring proficient or better is the Arkansas School for the Deaf Elementary School.

30. **Sources:** ADE Rules Governing the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) and the Academic Distress Program, September 2014: <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/legal/rules/current>. ADE interview.

31. **Source:** Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

32. **Note A:** FRL stands for Free or Reduced Lunch. A student is eligible for free lunch at school if his or her family income is below 130 percent of the poverty line; the student is eligible for a reduced-price lunch if the family income is below 185 percent of the poverty line.

Note B: A student is “in poverty” if the family income is less than the threshold set by the US Census Bureau. The thresholds vary by size and family composition. Family income is defined as income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (eg, public housing, food stamps). The same thresholds are used throughout the US, but are updated annually for inflation via CPI. Although the thresholds in some sense reflect family needs, they are intended for use as a statistical yardstick, not as a complete description of what people and families need to live. In 2013, a family of four (two children) would be in poverty if the family income was less than \$23,624. See <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html> for more information.

Sources: ADE database: <https://adedata.arkansas.gov/statewide/>. National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2000–01, 2005–06, 2009–10, and 2010–11. (This table was prepared December 2012.) For students in poverty, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates database (source data: American Community Survey).

33. **Note:** The NAEP Mathematics and Reading scale ranges from 0 to 500. Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant.

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 Mathematics and Reading Assessments. Office for Education Policy Benchmark Exam databases.

34. **Note:** Ranking for schools calculated by taking an average of % of students scoring proficient or better on the Augmented Benchmark Exams in literacy and math. There were 7 schools in the bottom 10% that were not in the 2014-15 school address database: Geyer Springs Elementary, Forest Heights Middle School, Pine Bluff Lighthouse Academy, Cloverdale Middle School, Stephens High School, Robert F Morehead Middle School, and WD Hamilton Learning Academy.

Source: ADE. Office of Education Policy (University of Arkansas) benchmark exam database and demographic data, 2013-14.



Forward

forwardarkansas.org



Working Together to Advance Education

Little Rock Area Public
Education Stakeholders Group

Mission

Becoming a leading state in education by improving student achievement at a **historically ambitious yet achievable rate** and **closing the achievement gap within a generation.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGyUmorOzQI>

Values

- 1) **Community Engagement** – Education is a local enterprise that thrives when entire communities are united in pursuit of a shared vision.
- 2) **Community-based Solutions** – Communities have diverse needs and must employ equally diverse methods to address those needs.
- 3) **Equity** – Excellence in education and student achievement is possible everywhere in Arkansas.
- 4) **Shared Vision** – Learning from each other in support of our shared vision is vital to strengthening education throughout our state.
- 5) **Innovation** – Engaged communities are committed to advancing local innovations in education to enhance student outcomes.

What We've Done

8,500
surveys



550
focus group participants



100
hours of
expert interviews

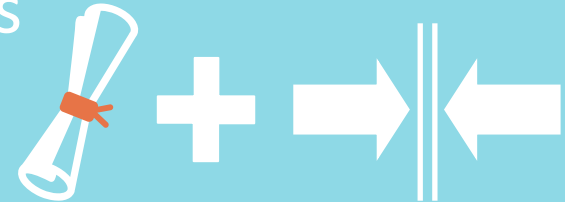


28
volunteer committee
members

7 areas
of focus



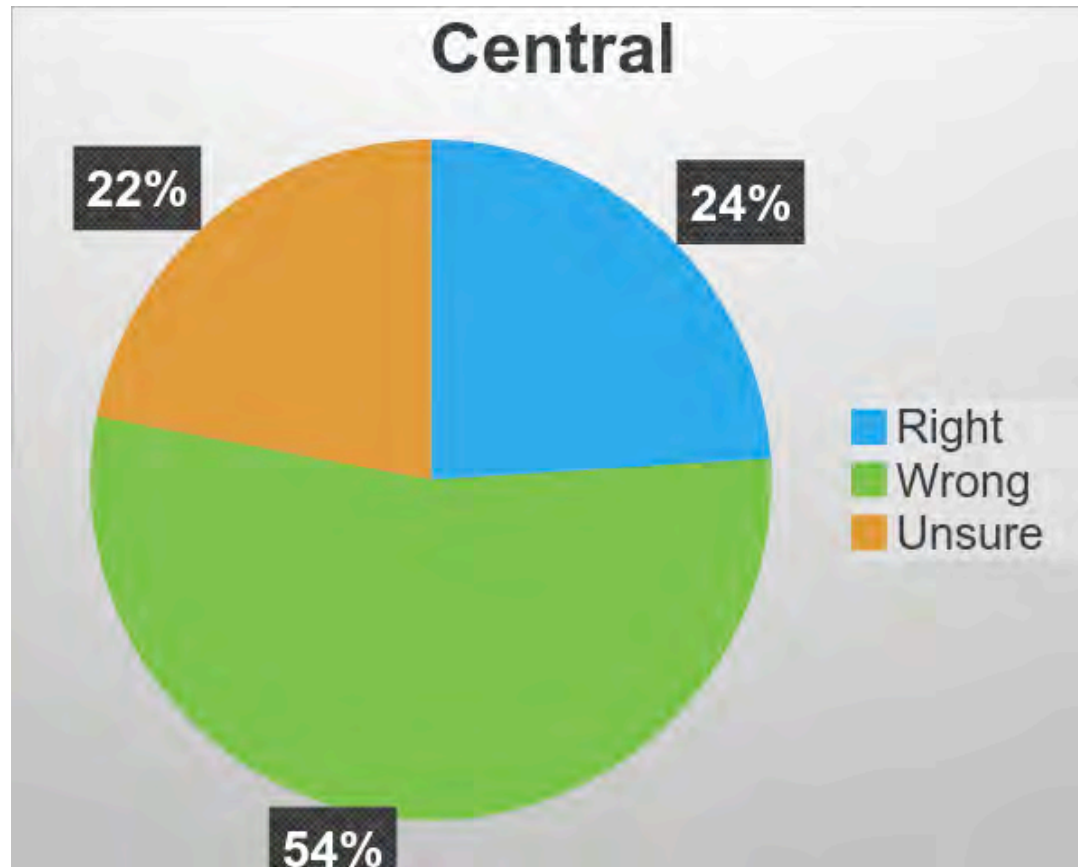
2 goals



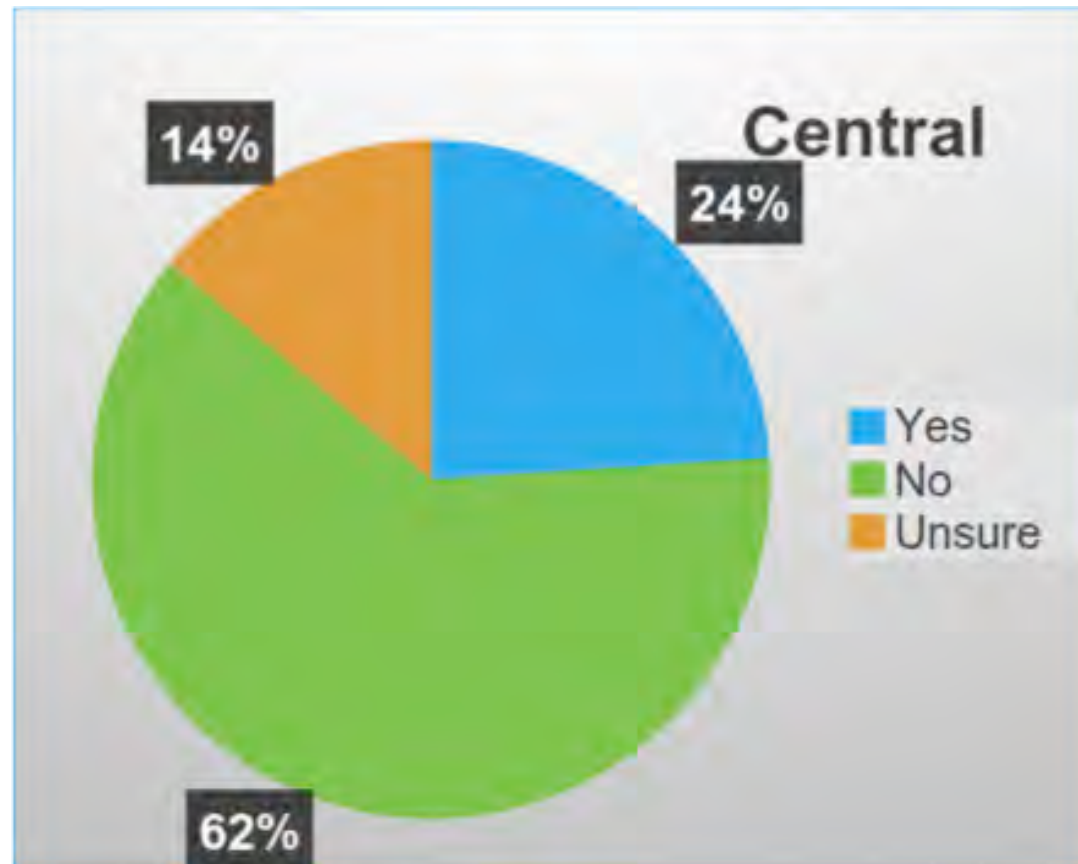
One vision



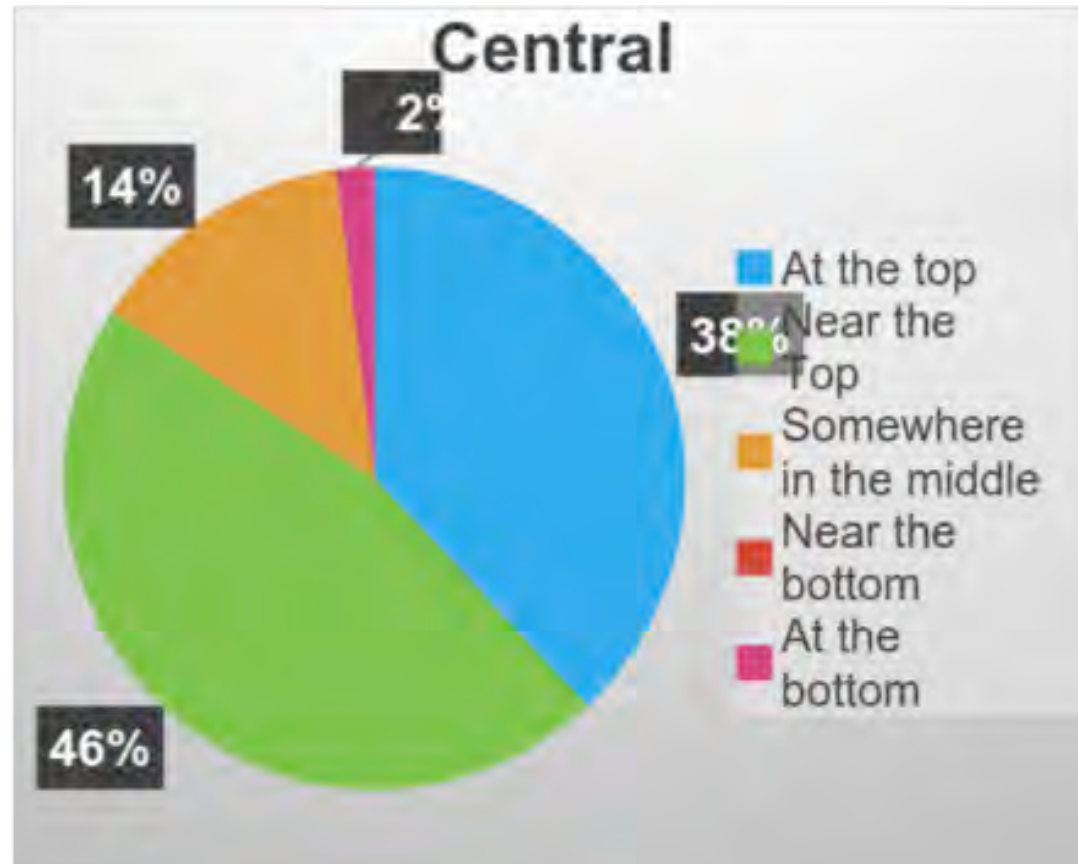
Do you think Arkansas is heading in the right or wrong direction when it comes to education?



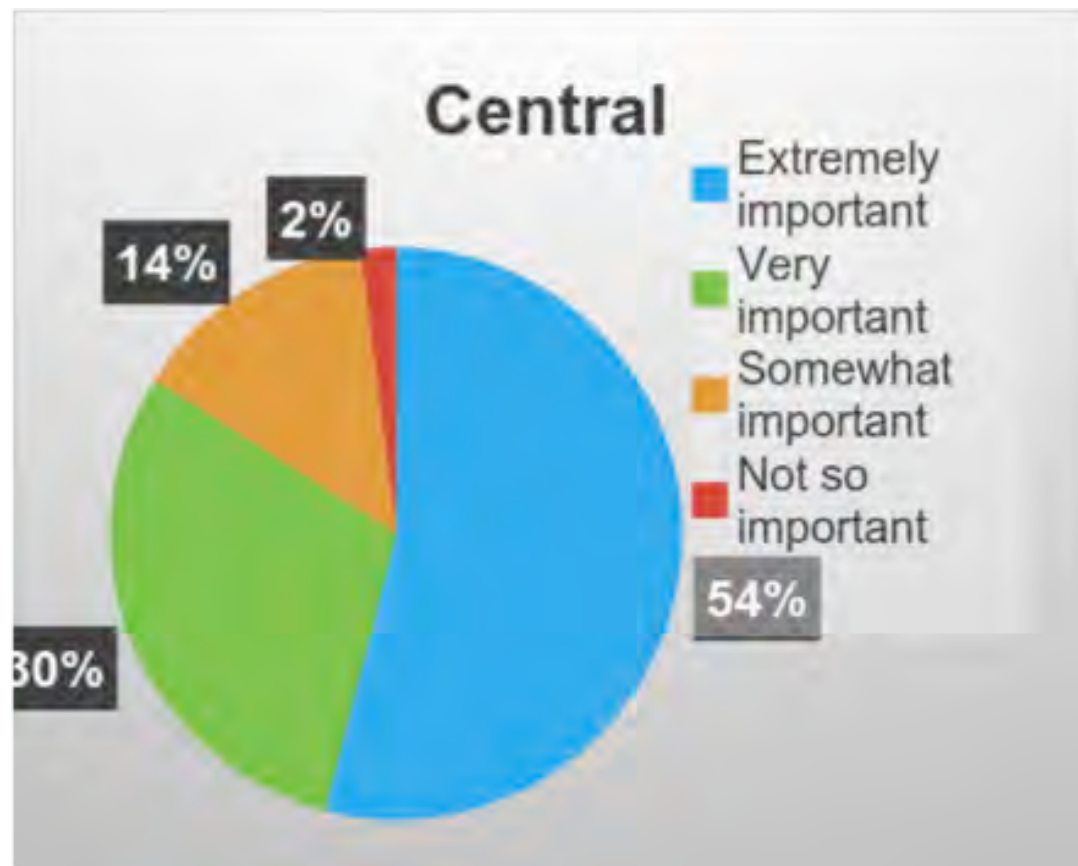
Do you think enough is being done to improve access to quality education for all children in Arkansas, no matter where they live?



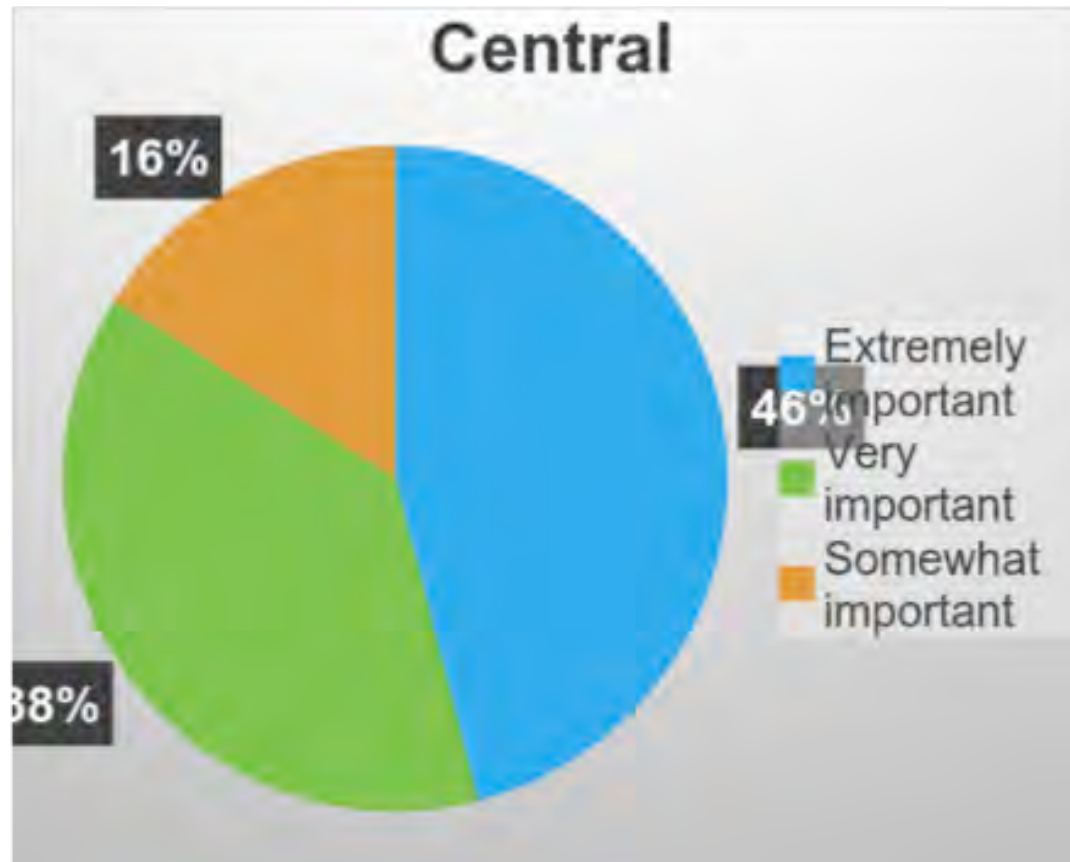
Where would you rank a quality education as essential to preparing Arkansas students to succeed in school and in life?



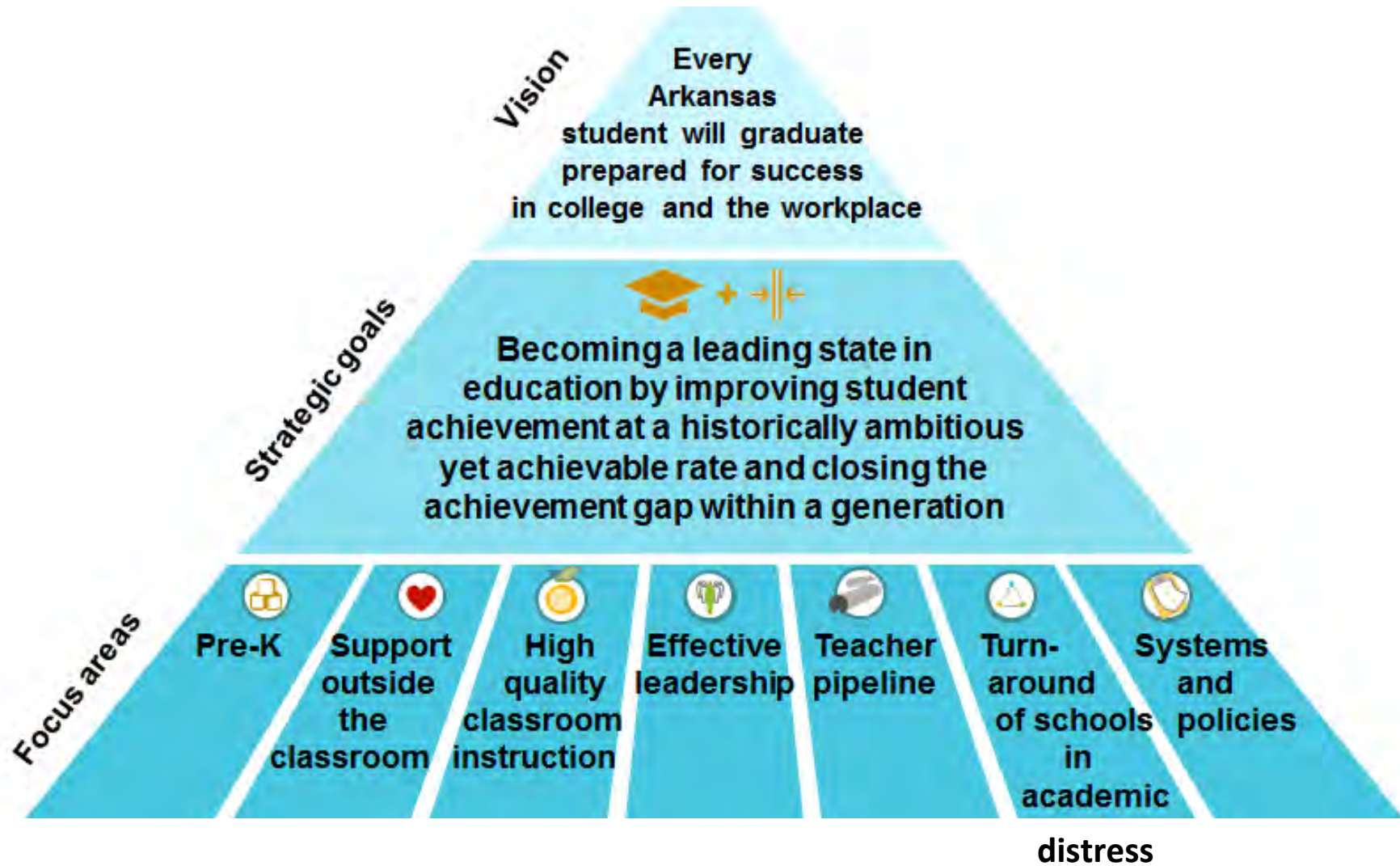
How important do you think a quality education and/or advanced training after high school is to Arkansans making family-supporting wages later on?



How important do you think it is that quality early childhood education is an essential part of the ForwARd Arkansas strategic plan?



ForwARd Structure



ForwARd Communities

In support of specific communities, ForwARd will provide:

- Access to technical assistance to develop local plans to advance public education, including data collection and analysis support;
- Exposure to effective practices;
- A peer learning community between parent advocacy groups, administrators, educators, faith-based institutions, business leaders, and other key community stakeholders;
- A platform to generate local energy and momentum; and
- Statewide recognition

Projected Timeline – Moving ForwARd

Phase I (Fall 2016)

Listening

Phase II (Winter 2016 - Spring 2017)

Learning

Phase III (2017 & Beyond)

Taking Action

*Center on Reinventing Public Education
Presentation to*

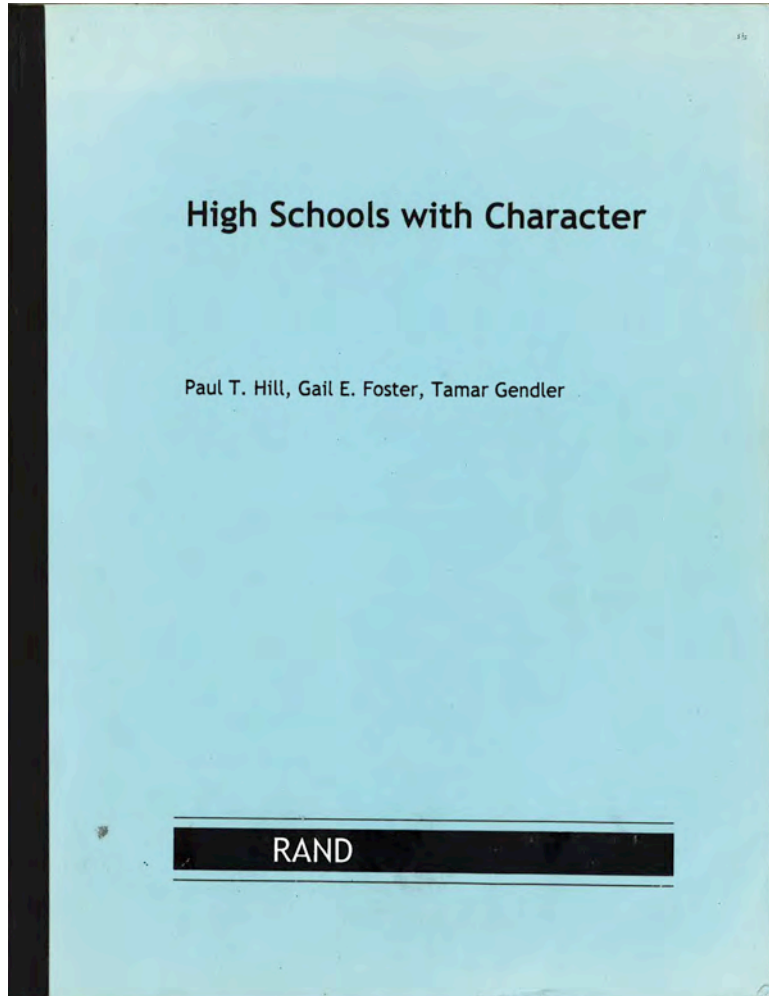
Little Rock Area Public Education Stakeholder Group

August 29, 2016
Jordan Posamentier
Sean Gill

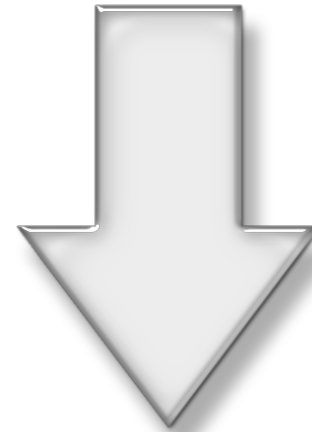
Presentation Roadmap

- About CRPE
- Six policy areas of concern
- District-charter collaboration
- Q&A

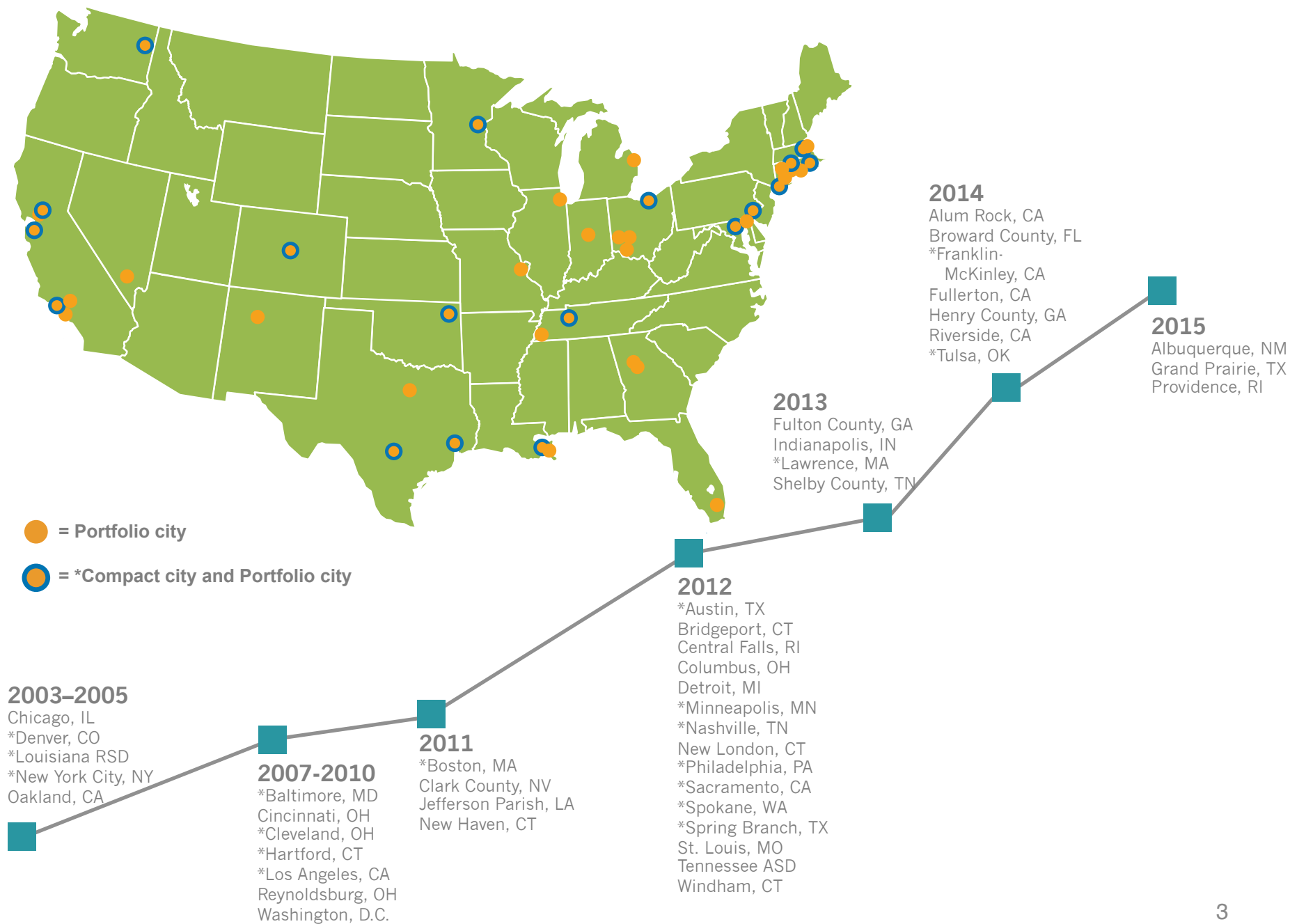
CRPE Research Approach



To help schools



help school systems



Six Policy Areas of Concern

Access for all to achieving schools

Serving a diverse population

Funding and cost effectiveness

Demographics and enrollment patterns

Facilities siting and modernization

District-charter collaboration

Four Challenges

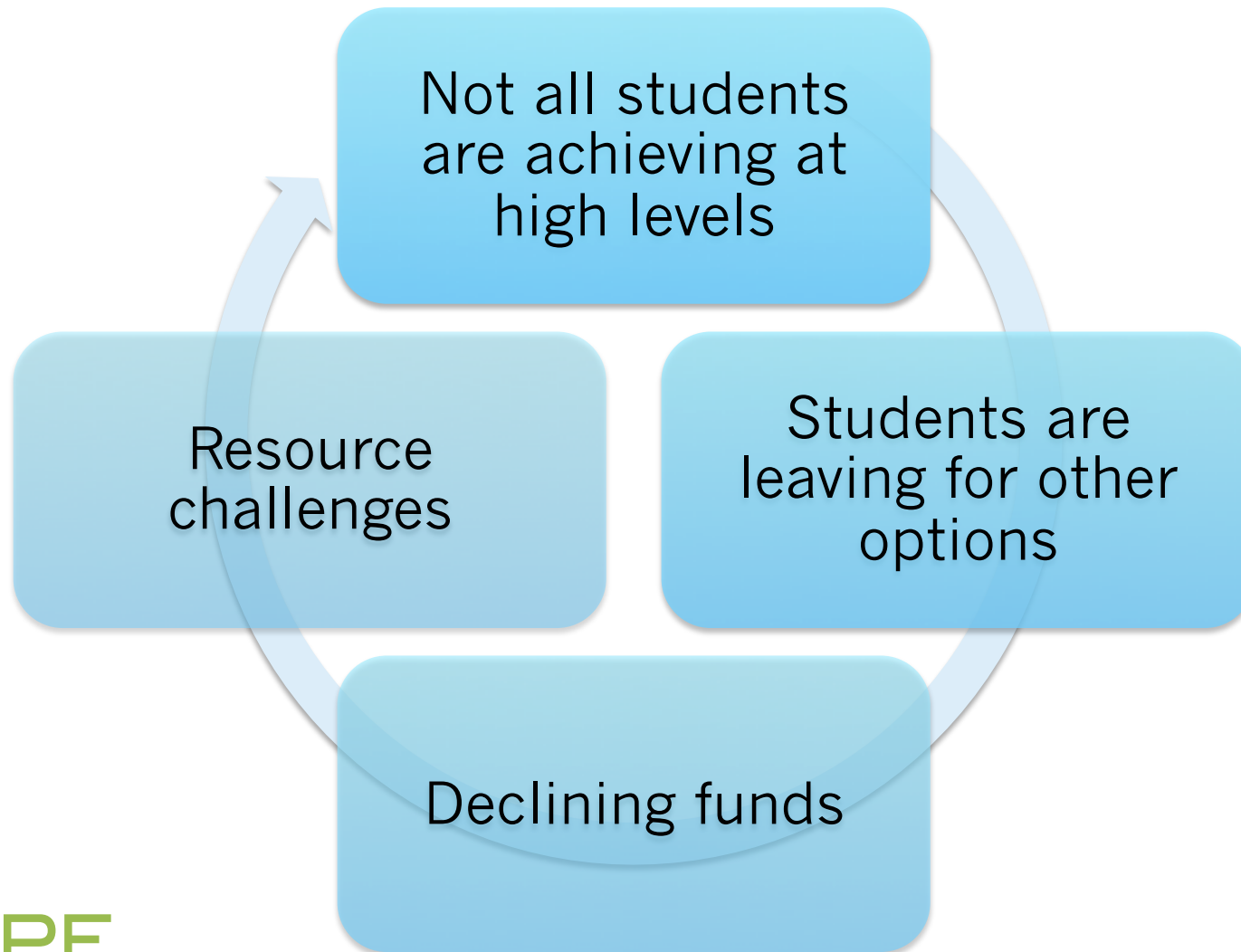
Not all students are achieving at high levels

Students are leaving for other options

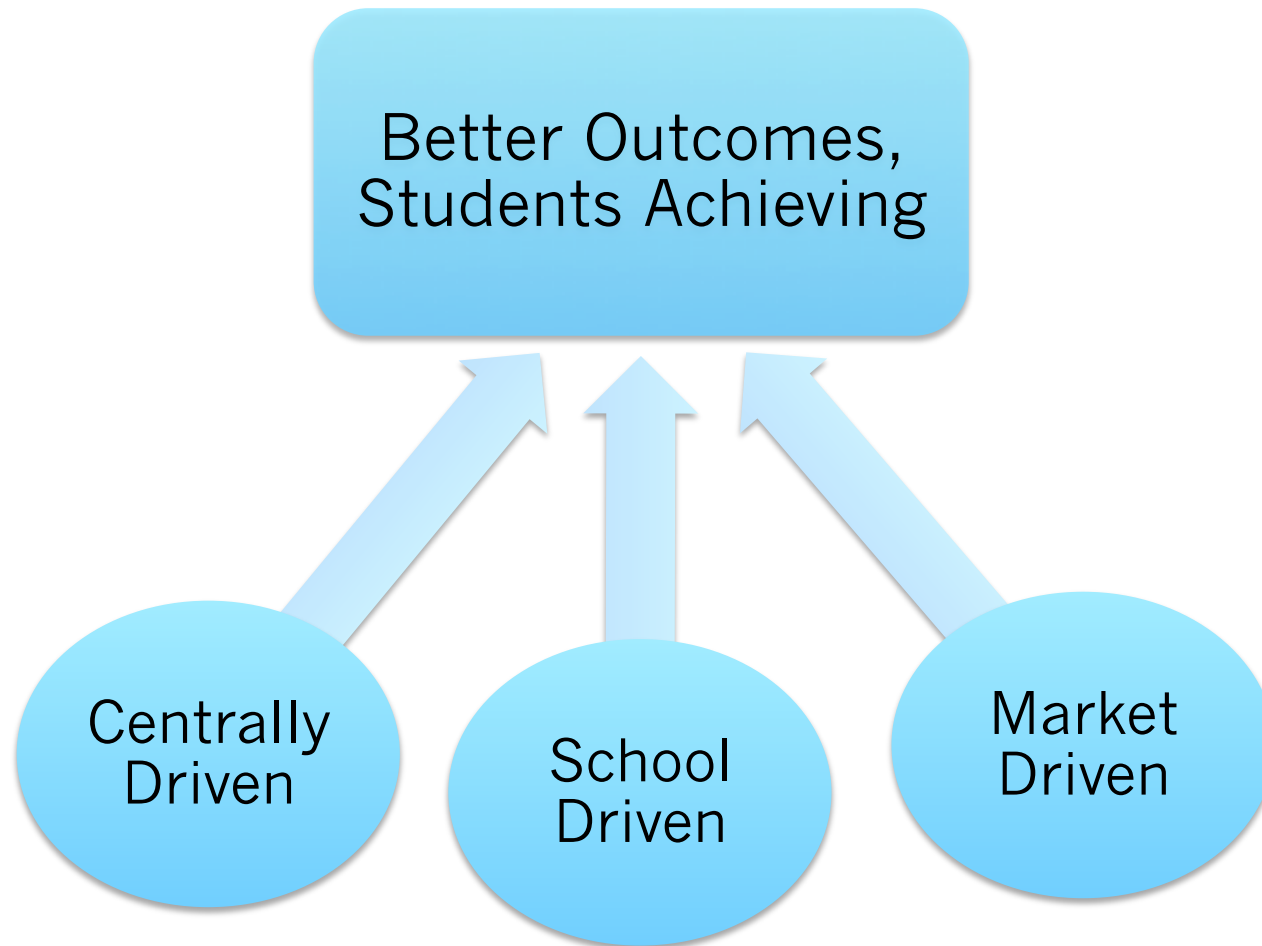
Declining funds

Resource challenges (e.g., facilities, human capital, expenses)

A Vicious Cycle

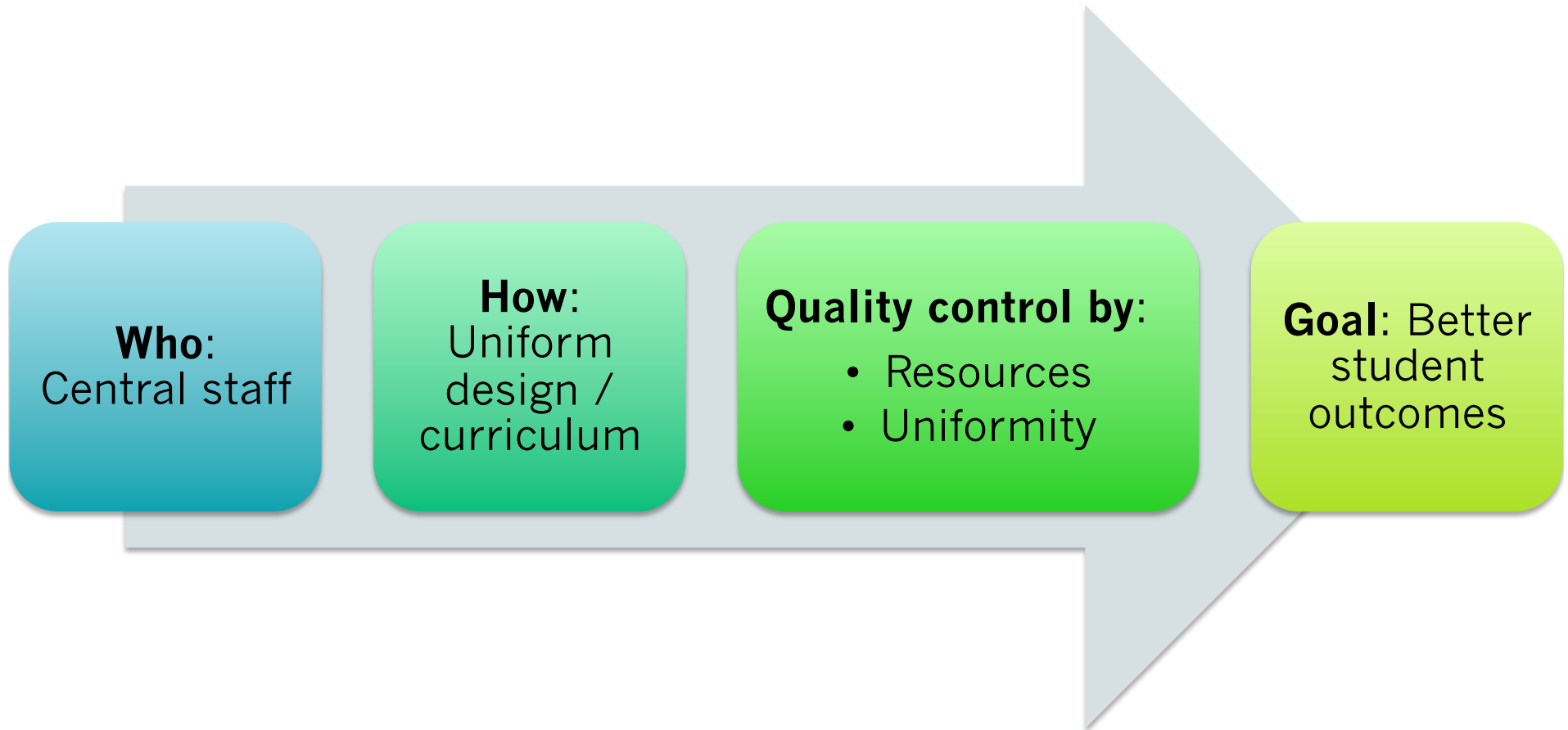


Theories of Action



Centrally Driven

130



Market Driven

131

Who: Consumers
(families)

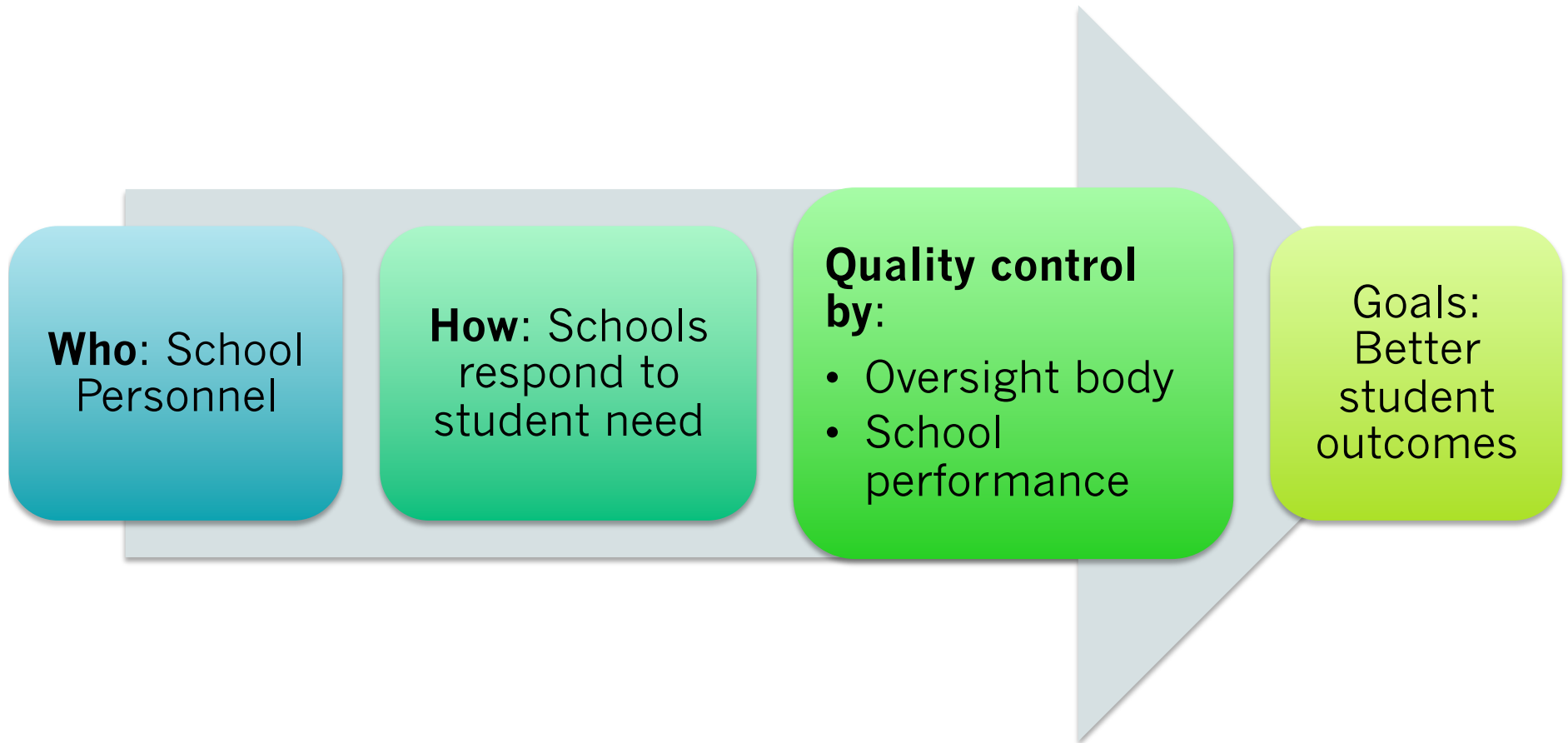
How: Schools
compete for
students

**Quality control
by:**
Vote with your
feet

Goal: Better
student
outcomes

School Driven

132



The Six policy Areas of Concern

Achievement levels

Serving a diverse population

Funding and cost effectiveness

Demographics and enrollment patterns

Facilities siting and modernization

District-charter collaboration

Thinking Through Meeting Diverse Student Needs

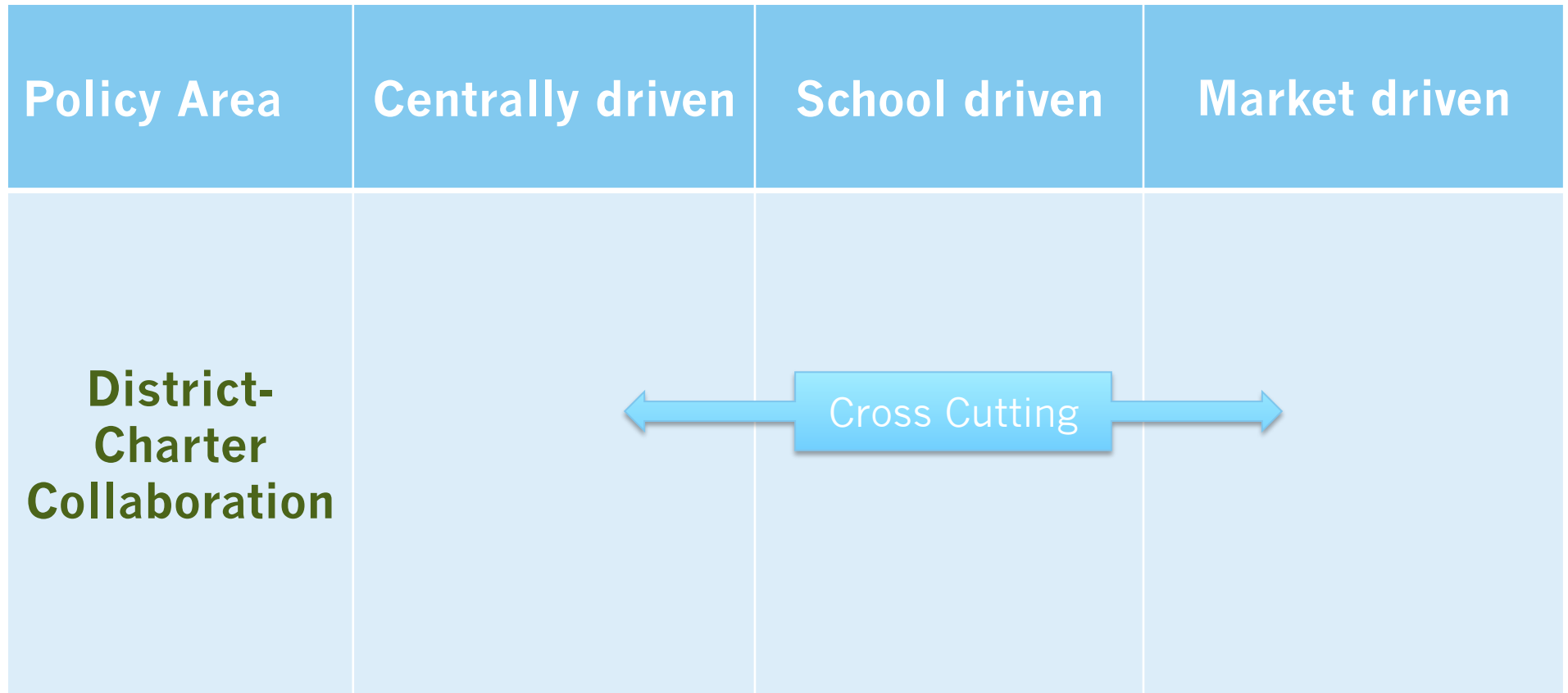
Policy Area	Centrally driven	School driven	Market driven
Meeting diverse student needs	Systemwide programs (e.g., ELL) focus on certain student populations	Schools differentiate, and families select based on fit	Families advocate

134

Thinking Through Funding

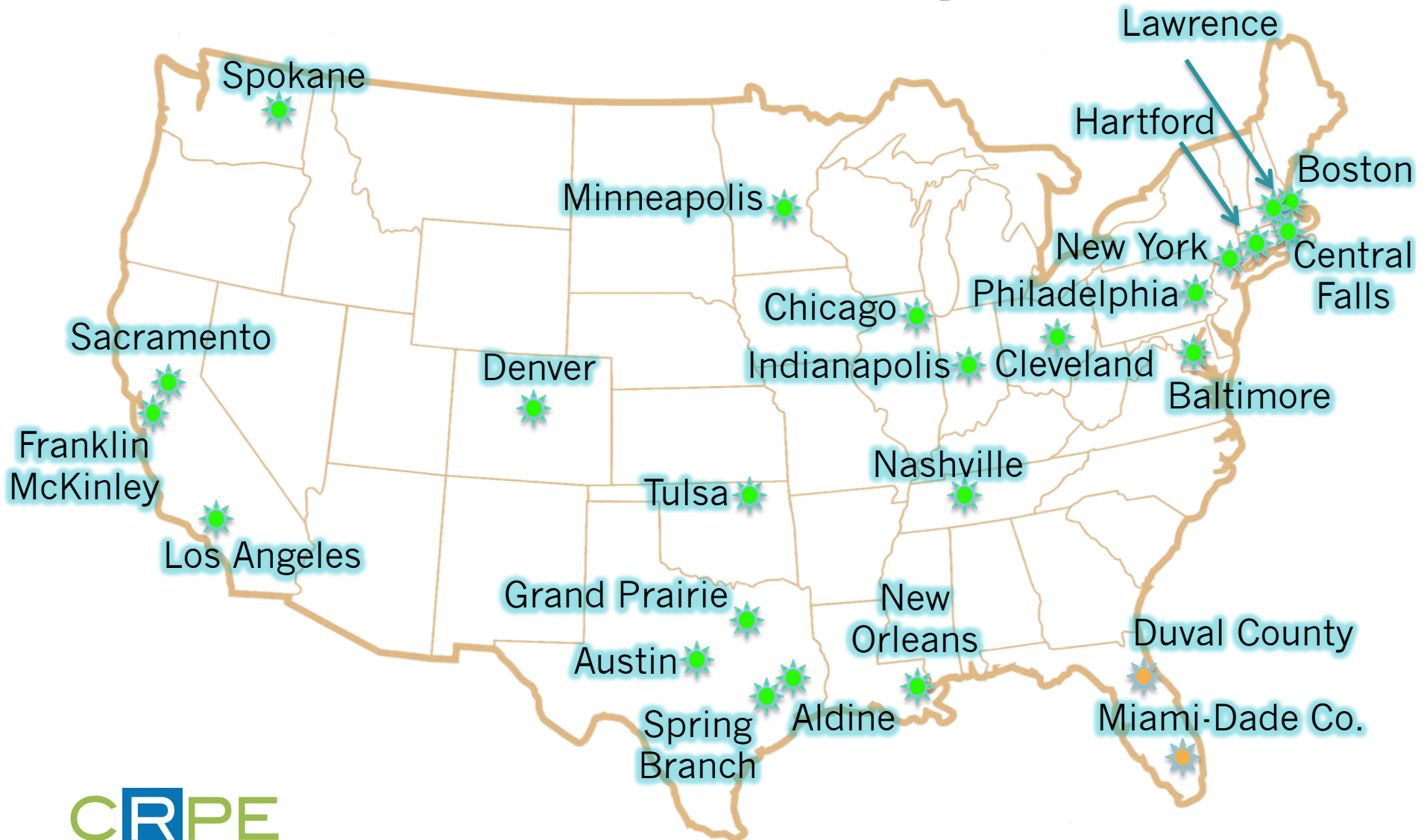
Policy Area	Centrally driven	School driven	Market driven
Funding & cost effectiveness	Distribute positions, not dollars, to schools (e.g., staffing formula)	Funding based on student need follows student to school of their choice (e.g., weighted student funding)	A set amount follows child to school, or learning options, of their choice (e.g., vouchers, ESAs)

Thinking Through Collaboration



136

Collaboration Compacts



Collaboration Theory of Change: Shared Resources & Responsibility

For School Districts

- A partner in the work of ensuring high quality schools in all neighborhoods
- Sharing burdens like talent pipeline and professional development
- Access to charter innovation, professional development, etc.
- Exposure to charter expertise

Collaboration Theory of Change: Shared Resources & Responsibility

For Charter Schools

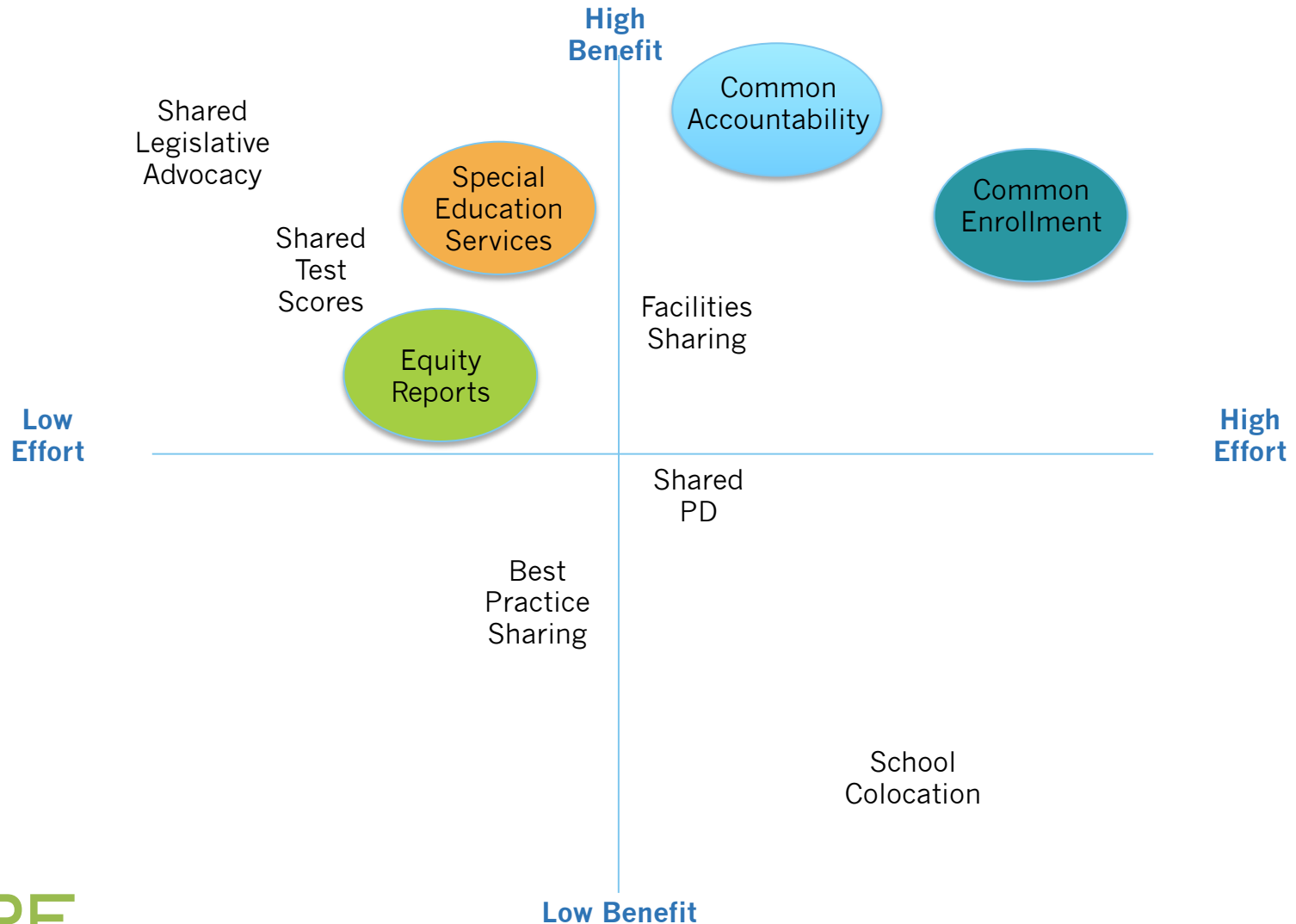
- Improve access to facilities, funding, and enrollment of families
- Reduces political tensions
- Exposure to district expertise
- Increase reach, impact beyond campus walls

Collaboration Theory of Change: Shared Resources & Responsibility

For Communities

- More high quality options available for students
- Better services for ELL and Special Education Students
- Streamlined information and systems help parents navigate, public hold accountable

Common Areas of Collaboration



Conditions That Support Success

- Stake in the game:
 - District have long term philosophy on role of charters in city.
 - Charters understand they have an interest in district success.
- Other players take interest:
 - States play regulatory, political role.
 - Broad community ownership, assisted by local leaders.
 - Independent coordinators/project managers.
- Agreements specify tangible outcomes; provide accountability.

Can Collaboration Help Little Rock?

Assess

- What are the relative strengths of district schools & charter schools?
- What are the most pressing needs of district schools & charter schools?

Consider

- Would it be possible to share resources & improve access?
- Is there a desire to share expertise or learn from each other?
- Is there a desire to tackle big problems together?

Define

- How would collaboration be formalized?
- Who would participate?
- What are measures of success and who tracks them?

Collaboration Resources & Research



- Collaboration newsletter & updates
- Papers on co-location, boundary spanners, charter interests
- Summative report later this year
- Future Research:
 - What are the constraints and opportunities on facilities?
 - What can states do?
 - How can leaders manage the politics of sustainable collaboration?
 - What makes knowledge-sharing efforts succeed or fail?

Other Resources & Research



- *Measuring Up: Educational Improvement & Opportunity in 50 Cities*
- *How Parents Experience Public School Choice*
- Public Engagement in Baton Rouge
- Personalized Learning Implementation

Questions or Comments?

Visit us at CRPE.org

Contact:

Jordan Posamentier, Esq.

Deputy Policy Director

jpos@uw.edu

@jposamen

Sean Gill

Research Analyst

srgill@uw.edu

@seanrobertgill

Directions for accessing the Little Rock School District ACSIP report:

1. Go to <http://www.indistar.org>
2. Click on “user login” in top right corner.
3. Enter login: **guestDAR402**
4. Enter password: **guestDAR402**
5. Click on Wiseways/Indicators & Rubrics tab.
6. Click on Comprehensive Plan for the full report.

LR Public Stakeholder Group - Covenant Keepers Charter School
Monday, August 8, 2016

Student Demographic - (race/ethnicity, percent of FRL, SPED)

51% AA, 49% Hispanic, 98% FRL, 12% SPED

Severe Need - 100% of our students are FRL this year. (Poverty levels increasing annually)

How NSLA funds are utilized to close the achievement gap

We have used NSLA funds to hire support staff, on-site tutoring, computer based intervention programs, intervention based PD for teachers, and technology. Support staff and tutors are used to provide supplemental and remedial instruction in the areas of literacy and math. They focus on using and implementing effective instructional strategies, methods and skills in the areas of need as determined by the data.

Membership fees to professional organizations for district administrators, building principals and district instructional coaches in order to remain abreast of best practices. Teachers are trained on how to use technology and engage the students with that technology.

Information regarding community-based instruction

FOCUS AREA 2: WRAP AROUND SERVICES

Years of working to fulfill our school's original vision for Southwest Little Rock families has equipped us to take on the many challenges we face as each new school year begins. We have found that our strength is in supporting our students and their families in ways that go well beyond the classroom. Our system for addressing the needs of those we serve is early needs assessment followed by action planning and coordination of services from instruction to physical and mental health. While we have done a great deal to address the needs of the "whole child" in previous years, in SY 15-16, Covenant Keepers has taken steps toward fully developing an innovative model that wraps services around the child. This "Wrap Around" model is on target to be fully operational in school year 2016-2017.

Our goal is to partner with area organizations to assist students who are perpetually in an out of school due to the repercussions of childhood trauma and other issues that impede students' progress. The severe needs of the students we work with in Southwest Little Rock has driven us to embrace our responsibility with genuine passion, and we have heard the desire of our community: a school that will generate authentic transformation in individuals and the community as a whole. The goal is to "Wrap-Around" various services for students who need extensive daily support through resources that are not immediately available in traditional schools.

Wraparound services are student and family supports integrated with and often delivered directly within schools help to address social and non-academic barriers to student learning. Examples of wraparound services are broad and include:

- Health, dental, and vision care

- Mental health services
- Behavioral health, nutrition, and wellness counseling
- Parent and family targeted services

While our school has offered these services in previous years, we have intensified our efforts to establish partnerships during SY 15-16, and are currently developing MOUs with additional partners and providers to roll out in the spring of 2016. (see attached letters of support/partnership). These organizations will provide their services to our students on campus primarily during school hours. Our master schedule has 60 minutes built into the middle of each day to provide academic, social, emotional, behavioral, or other interventions or services so time is not lost in core or elective classes.

The extended Wrap Around model at Covenant Keepers brings a new wave of innovation to help students and families work through the many challenges they face daily. We address many layers of childhood and family need including dentistry, physical health, professional counseling services, and tax preparation in English and Spanish to name just a few. The Wrap Around process is directed by a team consisting of family, service providers, and key members of the family's personal support network. The goal of this team is to collaborate weekly to arrive at a coordinated family-driven plan of care that is tailored to meet the needs of the individual students. The team's ultimate goal is to implement, monitor, and continually adjust the plan until all members conclude that the Wrap Around support is no longer needed.

The primary costs associated with maximizing the potential of our Wrap Around program are hiring (full time Resource Coordinator) and leasing additional space within our facility (offices and work space).

The goals of the CK Wrap Around program are as follows:

Goal 1: Covenant Keepers students will participate to improve their academic achievement in literacy and math.

¥ **Student Achievement Objective 1A:** The average daily attendance, grades and school behavior for students will improve each semester. A minimum of one semester will be examined to demonstrate improvement greater than the whole school data for the same indicators.

¥ **Student Achievement Objective 1B:** Students involved in tutoring activities for a minimum of 6 months will demonstrate academic improvement of one grade level per NWEA assessments, utilizing instruments such as IXL, Reading Plus, Skills Navigator, and using instructional tools as a pre/post measurement.

Goal 2: The Wrap Around Program will provide community support and services needed to improve student attitudes and diminish behavioral referrals while lowering the risk of dropping out of school. The WA will also help students and parents with conflict resolution.

Goal 3: Parents and their children will have opportunities to build healthy relationships, gain support with projects and homework, develop language skills, and volunteer in the community to

assist other parents and students. Parent education classes will be provided by the Jefferson Family Resource Center, and will focus on subjects such as child development, misbehavior and discipline, helping children achieve goals and develop self-esteem, emotional development, and social skills. Financial management classes will focus on helping participants track their personal expenses and identifying a monthly budget, creating strategies for saving money and paying off debt, explaining how to establish or reestablish a good credit record, balancing a checkbook, and other related topics.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES COVENANT KEEPERS IS EXPLORING

The Arkansas Arts Council sponsors a grant designed to advance and empower the arts and artists by providing services and funding for classroom programming that encourages and assists literary, performing and visual artists in achieving standards of professional excellence.

21st Century Community Learning Center provides for expanded-day learning opportunities for youth for the following educational enrichment programs: literacy, summer and weekend programs, and technology education. These programs are designed to integrate education, health, recreational and cultural learning for students.

Summer Learning—During the summer months, two learning sessions of 5 weeks in length will be provided. Each session will meet for 4 hours a day for four days a week, and at least 60 students will participate. The sessions will focus on academic and enrichment program modules in 1) Student Academic Programs 2) Violence/Substance Abuse Prevention, and 3) recreational activities and field trips.

A list of the ways charter schools are collaborating:

The collaboration with other districts and schools have been difficult. Since 2008, we decided to strategically place our school in the 72209 zip code and educate those students. We are 1.7 miles away from Cloverdale Middle School and 12.2 miles away from Mabelvale Middle School. We are close to 5 elementary schools—Baseline, Chicot, Mabelvale, Wakefield and Watson.

The barrier for our charter school pertains to requesting student information through an academic school year. Many of our students enter at least 4 grade levels below in literacy and math. Therefore, it's imperative we get student information as quickly as possible to provide the necessary support for our students to be successful.

Over the past 2 years, we've had some success with superintendents willing to meet with our charter administrators and discuss ways we can work together to support families and our community. It is our desire to continue ongoing collaboration with all local area districts to establish partnerships so all students can achieve.

Ways the schools are meeting the needs of at-risk students

Expeditionary Learning:

Because we wanted to be sure our students were getting the push to Common Core, we chose a curriculum that would help with this transition.

Studies have shown that schools that have implemented Expeditionary Learning have shown tremendous growth in ELA over a 3-year period. Upon further research, it was found that these schools mirror our Hispanic and African American population of students.

This curriculum is written so that teachers are able to implement key instructional routines and strategies that allow all types of learners, including special education students and ELLs, to access the material. Though the lessons are scripted, they are simply blue prints teachers use to set the tone and direction of the class for instructional success.

Eureka Math (Engageny):

In 2010, New York became one of twelve states to win the Race to the Top competition. NY became the first state to contract for the development of a full complement of PK-12 curriculum materials that are written for Common Core Math Standards.

The math modules outlined are sequenced and paced to support the teaching of mathematics in a way that supports the instructional “shifts” and the standards for mathematical practice demanded by the CCSS. The materials from EngageNY contain a sequence of lessons that combine conceptual understanding, fluency, and application.

Computer-Based Intervention

Every class is scheduled for CBI to support and enhance literacy and math skills. This time is given for students to work through lessons at their own pace. Each class is 50 mins. twice a week and we have encouraged parents to allow students to access this intervention program at home or during library hours.

Math progress will be assessed regularly through formative assessments, interim assessments, classroom assessment, and nine tests. Classroom teachers will evaluate these results and adjust as needed through PLC discussions. Summative assessments include ACT Aspire and NWEA.

Focus teachers (Whipps and Jones) aid the classroom teachers by interpreting, identifying and targeting the most frequently missed standards in PLC meetings. The focus teachers also support the curriculum and instruction by disaggregating the data with the teachers, and modeling Common Core Standards that supports student engagement through INBs.

Vertical and horizontal alignment is priority and strategies will be employed to ensure that teachers are teaching to standard for fidelity of curriculum. Evaluation will be based on formative pre and post assessments, interim assessments, walk throughs, and assessment results.

**Little Rock Preparatory Academy (LRPA)
and
Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock (EASW)
Stakeholder Questions**

· **Student Demographics (race/ethnicity, percent of FRL, SPED) for the 2015-2016 year**

Student Attributes	LRPA - Middle	LRPA- Primary	Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock (EASW)
Number of Students	118	312	233
Free & Reduced Lunch	118/100%	312/100%	233/100%
Non-English Primary Language	0/0%	5/1.6%	93/39.9%
African-American	98/83.1%	283/90.7%	128/54.9%
Latino	18/15.3%	28/9.0%	102/43.8%
White	2/1.6%	1/0.3	3/1.3%
Special Education	7/5.9%	14/4.5%	17/7.3%

· **Additional questions or research needed to benefit their school**

We would be interested in exploring partnership opportunities with community based organizations interested in serving our families and would love to learn more about how other schools utilize those partnerships to support their families.

· **How NSLA funds are utilized to close the achievement gap**

Little Rock Preparatory Academy and Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock teach a specific RIT model to all of our targeted assistance students that features a research validated curriculum. The curriculum requires small group instruction to students of similar skill levels. The students are assessed every 5-10 lessons and instruction is adjusted based on the needs of our students. The NSLA funds pay for the additional classroom teacher during that block, as well as part of the technology and curriculum.

· **Information regarding community-based instruction**

In the fall of 2014, Little Rock Preparatory Academy implemented the Learning Pass program allowing our students to take part in experiential learning outside the classroom, in their surrounding community. Throughout the Learning Pass program, students are exposed to different community organizations in the Little Rock area. The experiences are based around the state college and career readiness standards so students will be able to apply their classroom learning to real-world experiences. This program introduces our students to a

different form of learning and prepares them for their chosen career through reinforcement of course content and theory.

- **A list of the ways charter schools are collaborating**

Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock has participated in English Language Development professional development with Lisa Academy.

- **Ways the schools are meeting the needs of at-risk students**

Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock and Little Rock Preparatory Academy prepare students for competitive colleges, advanced careers and a life of citizenship and leadership in their communities. Our schools implement an academic design with eight core elements, not because these elements are new to education, but because they are proven, research-validated best educational practices. The eight elements are described below:

- 1. Serve students from early childhood through 8th grade.**

Many schools do not use one coherent curriculum across all major subjects and grade levels. As a result, there are gaps in the instruction that students receive when they move from one grade to another or from elementary to middle school. By implementing a single school design, Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep ensure that students do not have any gaps in their education.

The curriculum we choose to use is SRA Reading Mastery, Engage New York, Connecting Math Concepts and Core Knowledge.

- 2. More focused learning time using an interdisciplinary schedule**

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep offer a 200-day school year, which is longer than most surrounding public schools. We also offer a school day that is 20%-30% longer than most surrounding schools. Students can arrive as early as 7:00 a.m. and get picked up by 5 p.m. at the latest (instruction takes place from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.). The longer day allows for deeper, higher-quality student learning.

Exalt has an interdisciplinary schedule that provides students with the opportunity to learn across subjects in a broader, more holistic way. For example, it would be common for students to integrate math, art, geography and literacy into a project for their Global Studies course. This kind of project based learning increases students' capacity to think critically, solve problems, and synthesize information into knowledge.

- 3. Multi-modal learning environment**

Individual students learn in different ways and at different rates. In addition, all people learn in different ways when they participate in different modes of instruction. For example, students process and retain information in different ways when they listen to a teacher-delivered lecture, read a book, deliver a presentation, or engage in a

cooperative group project. That is why it is important for students to learn in different modalities throughout the school day.

The key to learning is to actively engage students in the learning process. By having students learn in different modalities, Exalt seeks to maximize student engagement throughout the day.

4. Embedded Standards & Assessment

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep use a well-rounded performance management system with a variety of key performance indicators including student engagement, behavior data, and achievement data on different internal & external assessments. This system allows us to analyze the data and make systematic, informed decisions based on facts.

Most importantly Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep assess student learning every 5 to 10 lessons as part of their instruction to ensure that students are mastering every subject weekly. We do not place students into courses or push them through from one grade level to the next without the skills they need to be successful.

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep's schedule is structured with two literacy and math blocks. This allows one class to move through the scope and sequence at a pace that allows all standards to be taught and a second class for remediation or exploration based on the student's individual needs as determined by the assessments.

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep also assess students between 5 to 6 times a year using the Illuminate and MAP assessments to determine how they stack up against their peers nationally against the Common Core Standards. We use the test results to specially design individualized instruction for every student so that we can assure that students are learning exactly what they need to learn to be successful.

5. Greater Teacher Ownership & Opportunity

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep seek to recruit the best and brightest teachers. Our schools are run by a team of educators who are gifted, hard-working, and accountable for student learning. All members of the teaching team are part of a curriculum and/or grade level team. These teams meet several times a year to evaluate their curriculum area and develop plans to make improvements.

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep have a grade level team based approach to delivering instruction. Teachers collaborate to deliver instruction to both classes in their area of strength. This allows teachers to take ownership over one core area for all students in that grade level.

At Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep, we set our teachers up for success. We provide our new teachers with four weeks of training in the summer so that they are firmly

grounded in our instructional methods, academic programs and behavioral system. All teachers receive extensive professional development in our programs.

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep have 2 teachers in every elementary classroom.

This co-teacher model allows for small student-to-teacher ratios and encourages greater teacher collaboration around lesson planning and delivery. It also reduces the time that teachers have to work on-site so that there is less burnout and greater job satisfaction.

6. Enhanced Use of Technology

Technology looks different in every school depending on the resources. However, our teachers use document cameras and in-focus machines to deliver multi-media lessons. We have a fully networked computer lab or mobile computer carts for every school.

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep use computer-adaptive assessments to develop a learning profile of each student that we use to develop lessons and provide an individualized education. Computer-based literacy and mathematics programs are implemented K-8 using a structured method to ensure all students are mastering skills they need for success.

7. Focus on Competitive Colleges & Advanced Careers

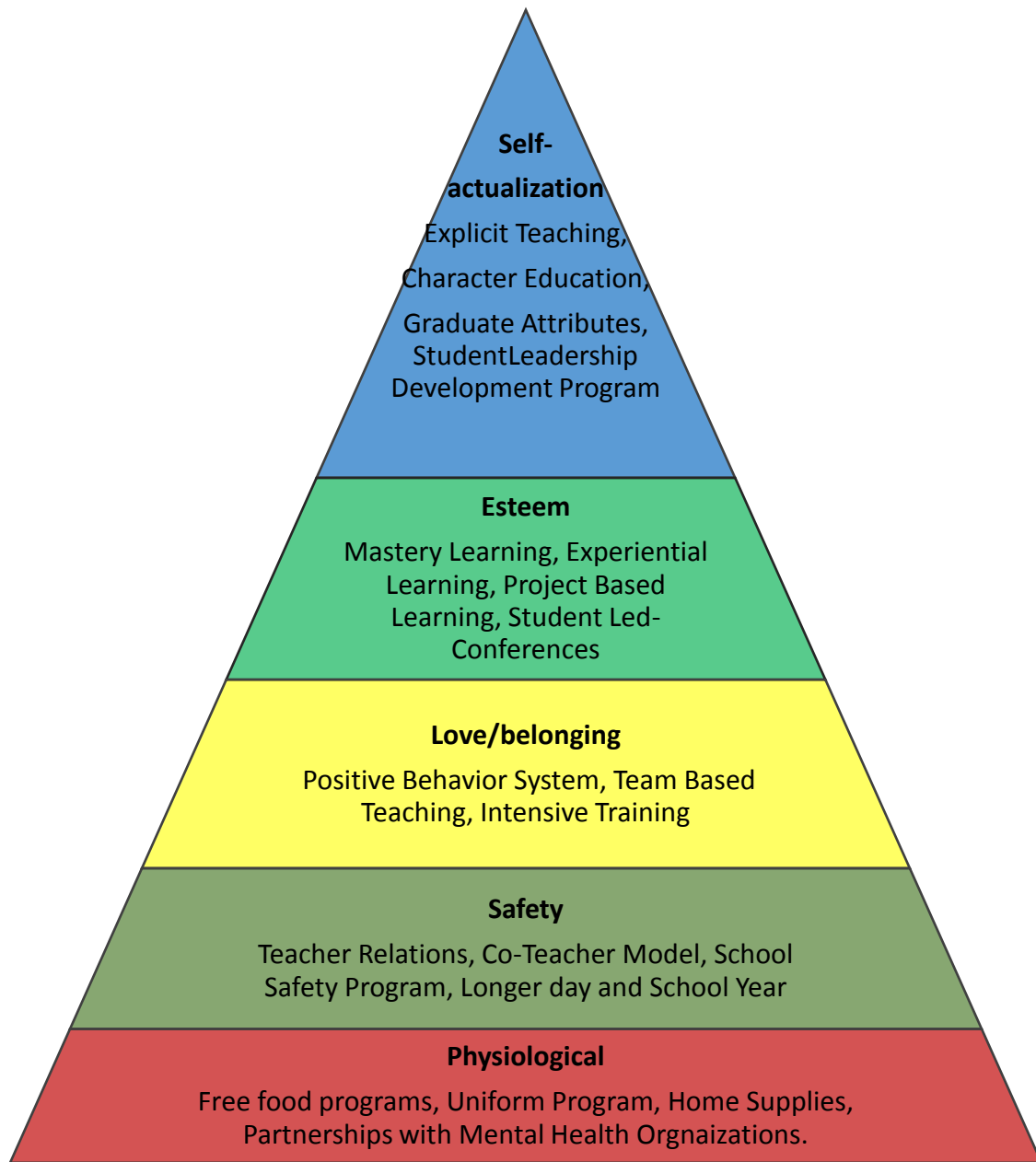
Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep prepare students for competitive colleges and advanced careers through a liberal arts education. To us, “liberal arts” means a focus on developing the broad foundation of knowledge, skills and attributes needed to succeed in competitive colleges, advanced careers or other paths that they may choose.

We achieve this by going above the Common Core standards and state requirements. Core Knowledge and project-based learning are a component of our curriculum daily.

8. Structured Leadership Development

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep have developed a curriculum and **positive behavior support system** that helps our student grow into productive citizens. Students learn character values that help shape them into tomorrow’s leaders.

Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep use Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs framework, developing a structured approach to serving the whole child by moving students from one level to the next through the pyramid in a systematic way. The pyramid diagram depicts Exalt Academy and Little Rock Prep’s resource/approaches to meeting each level and enabling our students to enjoy the success of self-actualization.



We believe that all students deserve only the best education. This model allows us to meet the needs of all our learners.

Charter Grant Awards 2009-2016

District LEA	District Name	Charter LEA	Charter School Name	Grant Start Date	Grant End Date	Total Spent	Remaining Awarded Funds	
72-05-000	Lincoln Consolidated School District	72-05-703	Lincoln Academic Center of Excellence	09/18/09	09/17/11	\$150,000.00	\$0.00	
60-01-000	Little Rock School District	60-01-702	Cloverdale Aerospace Technology Conversion Charter Middle School	05/19/10	05/18/12	\$61,647.06	\$0.00	
62-01-000	Forrest City School District	62-01-702	Lincoln Middle Academy of Excellence	05/19/10	05/18/12	\$61,355.05	\$0.00	
19-01-000	Cross County School District	19-01-703	Cross County New Tech High School	03/01/11	03/01/13	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
60-52-700	SIATech Little Rock	20-52-703	SIATech Little Rock	03/01/11	03/01/13	\$410,000.00	\$0.00	
35-41-700	Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School	35-41-701	Pine Bluff Lighthouse Charter School	03/01/11	03/01/13	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
54-40-700	KIPP Delta College Preparatory	54-40-702	KIPP Delta College Preparatory	05/24/11	05/24/13	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	
19-01-000	Cross County School District	19-01-701	Cross County Elementary	03/20/12	03/20/14	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
72-05-000	Lincoln Consolidated School District	72-05-706	Lincoln High School New Tech	03/20/12	03/20/14	\$599,952.28	\$0.00	
47-13-000	Osceola School District	47-13-705	Osceola STEM Academy	03/27/12	03/27/14	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
06-02-000	Warren School District	06-02-701	Eastside New Vision Charter School	03/06/12	03/06/14	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
60-41-700	LISA Academy - North Little Rock	60-41-701	LISA Academy - North Little Rock	07/31/12	07/30/14	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	
16-08-000	Jonesboro School District	16-08-703	The Academies at Jonesboro High	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$481,198.52	\$0.00	
47-02-000	Blytheville School District	47-02-706	Blytheville High School - A New Tech School	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$483,000.00	\$0.00	
04-05-000	Rogers School District	04-05-703	Rogers New Technology High School	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$483,000.00	\$0.00	
46-05-000	Texarkana School District	46-05-703	Washington Academy	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$478,613.13	\$0.00	
06-02-000	Warren School District	06-02-704	Brunson New Vision Charter School	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$482,979.66	\$0.00	
63-01-000	Bauxite School District	63-01-703	Miner Academy	03/11/13	05/30/15	\$482,987.57	\$0.00	
04-42-700	Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy	04-42-702	Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$483,000.00	\$0.00	
60-53-700	Premier High School of Little Rock	60-53-703	Premier High School of Little Rock	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$273,721.30	\$0.00	
35-42-700	Quest Middle School of Pine Bluff	35-42-702	Quest Middle School of Pine Bluff	03/01/13	05/30/15	\$328,140.28	\$0.00	
60-55-700	Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock	60-55-701	Exalt Academy of Southwest Little Rock	03/01/14	05/30/16	\$581,129.95	\$0.00	
60-54-700	Quest Middle School of West Little Rock	60-54-703	Quest Middle School of West Little Rock	03/01/14	05/30/16	\$586,226.48	\$0.00	
26-02-000	Fountain Lake School District	26-02-702	Fountain Lake Middle School Cobra Digital Prep Academy	03/01/14	05/30/16	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
00-40-700	Pea Ridge School District	04-07-703	Pea Ridge Manufacturing and Business Academy	03/01/14	05/30/16	\$599,999.97	\$0.00	
60-02-000	Warren School District	60-02-702	Warren Middle School	03/01/14	05/30/16	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	
18-03-000	West Memphis School District	18-03-703	The Academies at West Memphis	03/01/14	05/30/16	\$599,956.03	\$0.00	
60-56-700	Capitol City Lighthouse Charter	60-56-701	Capitol City Lighthouse Charter	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$508,000.00	\$0.00	
72-02-000	Farmington Public Schools	72-02-703	Farmington Career Academies	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$386,010.01	\$121,095.99	*grant still in progress
26-02-000	Fountain Lake School District	26-02-703	Fountain Lake Charter High	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$308,478.92	\$199,521.08	*grant still in progress
04-43-700	Haas Hall Academy-Bentonville	04-43-703	Haas Hall Academy-Bentonville	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$237,741.23	\$266,895.24	*grant still in progress
72-41-700	Ozark Montessori Academy	72-41-701	Ozark Montessori Academy	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$255,084.71	\$252,915.29	*grant still in progress
60-57-700	Rockbridge Montessori School	60-57-701	Rockbridge Montessori School	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$305,354.69	\$202,645.31	*grant still in progress
04-06-000	Siloam Springs School District	04-06-703	Siloam Springs High School	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$502,047.91	\$5,952.09	*grant still in progress
32-09-000	Batesville School District	32-09-703	Southside High School	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$361,738.17	\$146,261.83	*grant still in progress

06-02-000	Warren School District	06-02-703	Warren High School	03/01/15	05/30/16	\$446,211.39	\$61,788.61	*grant still in progress
-----------	------------------------	-----------	--------------------	----------	----------	--------------	-------------	--------------------------

Community Listening Forum					
Location	Date	Time	Location	Address	Hosts
Alma	9/13/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Alma High School Alma School District	101 E. Main Street Alma, AR 72921	Roy Hester and Cheryl Ziegler - Guy Fenter Co-op; Dr. Jennifer Jennings Davis - UAFS ERZ and STEM Education Center
Magnolia	9/19/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Reynolds Center Grand Hall C, Southern Arkansas University	SAU Donald W. Reynolds Campus and Community Center, 100 E University St, Magnolia, AR 71753	Phoebe Baily and Monica Morris: SWEAC; Marsha Daniels and Karen Kay McMahan: SCSC; Scott White: SAU STEM Center; Roger Guevara: SAU ERZ
Melbourne	9/20/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Ozarka Lecture Hall Ozarka College	218 College Drive Melbourne, AR 72556	Gerald Cooper and Mark Gibson: Northcentral Coop; Dr. Julie Grady: ASU STEM Center/Ozarka College
Forrest City	10/3/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	East Arkansas Community College Fine Arts Center	1700 Newcastle Rd. Forrest City, AR 72335	Suzanne McCommon and Jimmie Lou Brandon: Great Rivers COOP; Dr. Cynthia Miller: ASU STEM Center
Monticello	10/6/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Southeast Education Service Cooperative	1022 Scogin Drive, Monticello, AR 71655	Karen Eoff and Rhonda Mullikin: SE Coop; Wanda Jackson: UAM STEM Center; Tracie Jones: UAM ERZ
Pine Bluff	10/10/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative	912 West 6th Pine Bluff, AR 71601	Danny Hazelwood and Kay Simpson: ARESC Coop; Dr. Joy Jackson: UAPB STEM Center
Jonesboro	10/11/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Cooper Alumni Center Arkansas State University	2600 Alumni Blvd., Jonesboro, AR 72401	Donna Harris and Angie Carlton: NE Coop; John Manning and Tish Knowles: Crowley's Ridge Coop Dr. Julie Grady: ASU STEM Center; Jill Clogston: ASU ERZ;
Arkadelphia	10/17/16	5:30-7:00 pm	Garrison Activities Center Lecture Hall, Henderson State University	1100 Henderson St. Arkadelphia, AR 71999	Darin Beckwith and Beth Neal: Dawson ESC; John Ponder and Deb Young: Dequeen/Mena ESC; Donnie Whitten: Arkadelphia SD; Betty Ramsey: HSU STEM Center; Greg Wertenberger: HSU ERZ
Conway Area	10/24/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Hargis Conference Center, Arch Ford Education Service Cooperative	101 Bulldog Drive, Plumerville, AR 72127	Phillip Young and Lenett Thrasher: Arch Ford ESC; Jeff Williams and Leasha Hayes: Wilbur Mills ESC; Dr. Uma Garimella: UCA STEM; Vic Dreier: ATU STEM
Springdale	10/25/2016	5:30-7:00 pm	Har-Ber High School -Tentative	300 Jones Road Springdale, AR 72762	Dr. Charles Cudney and Marcia Sanders: NW Coop; Lynne Hehr: UofA STEM Center; Lindsey Swagerty: UofA ERZ